

AUTHORING BODIES:
WHITE SOUTHERN WOMEN'S WRITING, 1920-1940

By

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For my mother,
Lola Elizabeth Scott Morris,
and
in memory of my father,
Raymond Alan Morris

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In the American South, an image of the lady as selfless, morally and spiritually transcendent, and naturally fitted for a domestic life of service to the family dominated definitions of southern womanhood well into the 1930s. The ideal of the lady depended upon divorcing womanliness from corporeality. Subject to regulatory codes that repressed their bodies and desires, codes that ensured the white woman's body was effectively banished from the cultural imagination, privileged white southern women inherited an alienating and ultimately untenable identity. This dissertation examines the work of four authors who flesh out a white female body to critique a domestic economy that they characterized as furthering patriarchal interests at the cost of women. Unearthing the genteel corpses produced by southern restrictions of the female body, Evelyn

Scott's autobiography and fiction establish the need for a radical restructuring of the region's domestic order and female identity. By depicting the upper-class woman's body as a social text, Frances Newman's fiction and criticism open up the possibilities for women to rewrite their identities. Though she points to the same social regulation of female corporeality identified by Scott, Newman celebrates the woman's body's ability to parodically resist and overturn stifling domestic stories. The limits of Newman-style masquerade are evidenced by the flapper. Though the flapper's manifest corporeality disrupts definitions of the lady and belle, the figure is ultimately absorbed into the dominant culture and erased as an important regional image of privileged white womanhood. Zelda Fitzgerald, however, uses the flapper's dancing body to model corporeal resistance to deadening domesticity in her autobiographical novel Save Me the Waltz. Katherine Anne Porter's Miranda stories critique the social order by exposing the mangled bodies that Porter sees at the heart of every domestic story. But Porter's depictions of Miranda Gay's continual flight suggest that women can avoid re-enacting the deforming stories of their mothers. Southern women writers testified to the difficulty of wresting a body from the social stories that envelop it, yet their portrayals of contentious corporealities advanced feminist social transformation.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Luce Irigaray once pointed out that "the female body has always figured into the male corpus" but has rarely "become the object of a female subjectivity experiencing and identifying itself." Irigaray suggests that to enact "social and cultural transformation," we need to develop a female-originated representation of body--a "morpho-logic"--in the stories that we tell.¹ This dissertation will argue that the fiction of Evelyn Scott, Frances Newman, Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald, and Katherine Anne Porter--southern white women writing in the 1920s and 1930s--constitutes such a project.

That their work does so is perhaps all the more surprising given the context in which they wrote. While, historically, materiality has been framed as feminine and has freighted women with often socially negative meanings,² in southern ideology, the body of the privileged white woman

¹Luce Irigaray, "Writing as a Woman," interview with Alice Jardine, Je, Tu, Nous: Toward a Culture of Difference (New York: Routledge, 1993) 59.

²See Susan Bordo, Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body (Berkeley: U of California P, 1993).

has been denied and suppressed. As Allen Tate writes in The Fathers, adult southern white women "were only neck and head set above a mysterious region that did not exist."³

Womanliness and embodiment were at odds in the South. Dominant southern thought relegated corporeality to African-American and working-class women, stereotyping them as highly sexual, animalistic, and earthy. Within southern society's persistent ideology of ladyhood--arguably, a regionalized version of "the cult of true womanhood"--the African-American woman was not perceived as enacting "natural" or "pure" femininity.⁴ Literary historian Diane Roberts verifies this, noting that southern black women were assigned Bakhtinian "grotesque bodies" connected with "eating, drinking, defecation and other elimination (sweating, blowing of the nose, sneezing), as well as

³Allen Tate, The Fathers (1938; Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1977) 43. This novel, like southern culture, rests upon the body of the "bodiless" woman; the narrative chronicling the story of "the fathers" opens with family clustering around the coffin containing the corpse of the mother. In fact, the fifteen-year old narrator asserts that "the death of [his] mother is a suitable beginning for [his] story," a story which repeatedly moves away from and returns to the woman's originary body (4). This lady's body--or at least Lacy Buchan's invocation of it--is thus central to the telling of the (male) story but is pointedly absent from that story.

⁴See Hazel Carby, Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist (New York: Oxford UP, 1987), chapter 2.

copulation, [and] pregnancy."⁵ Such bodies contrast with the "classical bodies" associated with the privileged southern women who enacted their world's conceptions of femininity. Roberts explains:

The classical body is elevated . . . nonsexual, cold: "The verbal norms of official and literary language, determined by the canon, prohibit all that is linked with fecundation, pregnancy, childbirth . . ." [Bakhtin 320]. The classical body tidily represents the white upper-class southern woman, estranged from her own physicality. . . . The white lady is prohibited from speaking a vernacular of bodily functions from sex to birth to menstruation to defecation because she is constructed to be "innocent" of such things, chaste, orifices closed, a silent endorsement of the patriarchal representation of her as the designated work of art of southern culture.⁶

Sidonie Smith notes that this process of "ideological enshrinement" leads to an "objectification of the body [that] encourages the process whereby others whose bodies are identified as culturally 'grotesque' become more fully body."⁷ "The pregnant black woman's body is present in a

⁵Roberts is quoting Mikhail Bakhtin, Rabelais and His World (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984) 317; see Diane Roberts, Faulkner and Southern Womanhood (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1994) xiv.

⁶Roberts xiv.

⁷Sidonie Smith, Subjectivity, Identity, and the Body: Women's Autobiographical Practices in the Twentieth Century (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1993) 6.

way the empedestaed white woman's body is erased," Roberts concludes.⁸

Such bifurcation instituted more than a division of "low" and "high"; it created a dichotomy in which privileged white women alone defined "true womanhood," and rhetoric about womanhood emphasized female transcendence of the corporeal. The "Key-Ice" toast traditionally offered at University of Alabama fraternity dances in the 1920s exemplifies this rhetoric's prescriptive qualities. Standing by a block of ice and lifting a glass of water, one of the brothers would pay this tribute,

"To Woman, lovely woman of the Southland, as pure and chaste as this sparkling water, as cold as this gleaming ice, we lift this cup, and we pledge our hearts and our lives to the protection of her virtue and chastity."⁹

(The toast seems particularly ironic addressed, as it was on occasion, to Zelda Fitzgerald.)

The lady's body--a contained and restrained anti-body--was foundational to the southern order and a powerful regulating image. Anne Goodwyn Jones writes, "The southern lady is at the core of a region's self-definition; the identity of the South is contingent in part upon the

⁸Roberts xv.

⁹Quotd. in Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, Revolt Against Chivalry (New York: Columbia UP, 1974) 308; see also Nancy Milford, Zelda (New York: Harper & Row, 1970) 21.

persistence of its tradition of the lady."¹⁰ The region's "politicization of the intense privacy of white women's flesh"¹¹ reveals an ideological dependence upon the simultaneous corporeality and disembodiment of privileged white women. For example, the lady, constructed as properly and naturally above sexual approach and reproach, was also identified as the object of perceived threats of rape. Lynchings committed in the name of protecting southern womanhood signified that the white woman's body functioned politically to fortify codes of chivalry and reinforce rigid racial and gender divisions and oppressions well into the 1930s.¹² Thus, the upper-class white woman's body legitimated the code of southern honor even as that code depended upon and perpetuated a view of the southern lady as virtually bodiless.

It is important to stress that the "banishment of the body and its desires" in constructions of southern white female identity does not imply a concurrent emergence of

¹⁰Anne Goodwyn Jones, Tomorrow is Another Day (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1981) 4.

¹¹Patricia Yaeger, "Beyond the Hummingbird: Southern Women Writers and the Southern Gargantua," Haunted Bodies eds. Anne Goodwyn Jones and Susan Donaldson (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, forthcoming) 291.

¹²See Hall 61, 133-145, 150-155.

agency or reason as the ground for "self" for white women.¹³ Indeed, though the lady might have been considered high-minded, she was supposed intellectually and emotionally submissive. Isa Glenn's novel Southern Charm clarifies that the final female product of "perfect" southern rearing "is, after all, a doll."¹⁴ Indeed, the "idea of southern womanhood specifically denies the self."¹⁵ Privileged southern women in the twenties and thirties inherited a history--a social story--which framed them as selfless, mindless, and bodiless.

To think of the lady as a story is not difficult; after all, the lady is a cultural symbol, a representation carrying particular codes for the social order. In her examination of the models of womanhood that William Faulkner negotiated, Diane Roberts identifies the lady and other southern female iconographic figures--the mammy, the mulatta--as "highly articulated roles" that serve as cultural and inheritable "stories."¹⁶ J. Hillis Miller notes that such repetition of "the 'same' stories over and

¹³Smith 6; see also 15-17.

¹⁴Isa Glenn, Southern Charm (New York: Knopf, 1928) 249.

¹⁵Jones 4.

¹⁶Roberts uses both terms. Roberts xii.

over" is "perhaps the most powerful . . . of ways to assert the basic ideology of [a] culture."¹⁷ Indeed, Alan Sinfield suggests that the repetitions of such culturally dominant stories create a "framework of socially constructed possibilities" that inform, and perhaps produce, individual identity: "The stories through which we make sense of ourselves are everywhere," percolating through all facets of our public and personal lives.¹⁸ We "inhabit" stories.¹⁹

The kinds of foundational "stories" that would-be ladies in the twenties and thirties inherited and inhabited were primarily stories of courtship, love, marriage, and motherhood--stories bound by the term "domesticity."²⁰ Scott's, Newman's, Fitzgerald's, and Porter's fiction identifies "traditional" domestic stories (at least as the authors envisioned traditional domesticity) in depictions of genteel women defined wholly in terms of family and self-abnegation: the humility and self-denial of Scott's

¹⁷J. Hillis Miller, "Narrative," Critical Terms for Literary Study, 2nd ed., eds. Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995) 72.

¹⁸Alan Sinfield, Literature, Politics, and Culture in Postwar Britain (Berkeley: U of California P, 1989) 36, 23.

¹⁹Sinfield 29.

²⁰The term "domestic stories" here does not refer to the tradition of domestic fiction but instead refers to the cultural conception of domesticity as the limiting narrative of women's lives.

tortured Mrs. Farley; Newman's portrait of mothers "infallible as any pope and more righteous than any saint"²¹; Fitzgerald's Millie Beggs, who sweetly sacrifices all for husband and children; and Porter's Sophia Jane, the grandmother whose rigid sense of duty to family guides her every unquestioned action. In each instance, the writer points to the narrowness of traditional definitions of domestic womanhood associated with the lady.

Each author in turn attempts to rewrite the domestic stories characterized by mothers by depicting younger characters who renegotiate, with varying degrees of success, the life stories of the previous generation. Abandoning romantic fictions of love and marriage which they associate with traditional domesticity, the writers in my study expose a domestic economy²² in which courtship and marriage operate within a system of exchanges and transactions that objectify and deaden women. Their fictions evidence that even women

²¹Frances Newman, The Hard-Boiled Virgin (1926; Athens: U of Georgia P, 1980) 10.

²²I choose "economy" specifically because it reflects the language of the authors. For example, Scott points to the belle's "professional career" in a marriage "market"; Newman suggests that the wife is little more than a prostitute, selling herself for security and profit; Fitzgerald insists that women who wear cosmetics are merely capitalizing on standard business practices guiding female self-production; and Porter tears away sentiment associated with love-and-marriage stories to expose how domestic arrangements depend upon the exchange of women's flesh.

who could not have claimed to have lived conventionally domestic lives clearly felt the pressure of a cultural imperative for "domestic" womanhood.²³

Bodies, too, can be thought of as stories, as "inscriptions . . . capable of reinscription, . . . capable of being lived and represented in quite different terms."²⁴ Scott, Newman, Fitzgerald, and Porter "author bodies" in the sense that they consciously set out to script an embodied upper-class, white female identity; they revise the story of the lady by conceiving of a subjectivistic body that had not been granted her in the cultural imagination. They do not represent just one kind of corporeality, but all of their representations of the privileged white woman's body are guided by what we now can see as a feminist perspective striving for "social and cultural transformation."²⁵ This does not mean that the bodies they write are necessarily affirmative expressions of self. Indeed, the white woman

²³Newman never married and took several lovers; Porter married and divorced as many as six times and also had many love affairs; at eighteen, Scott ran away to Brazil with a married man who was a dean at Tulane college, subsequently had a son with him, and then lived in an experimental Greenwich Village community; Fitzgerald's exploits as a jazz-age wife and mother are infamous.

²⁴Elizabeth Grosz, Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1994) xiii.

²⁵Irigaray 59.

with a deformed or rotting body--a grotesque body--effectively disrupts stifling cultural prescriptions for female identity. Most often the bodies scripted by the writers of my project function as critique of an old rather than affirmation of a new southern female identity.

The second chapter, "'Hedged and Hemmed In': Evelyn Scott's *Narrow Houses*," establishes that the privileged white woman's body is foundational to Scott's definition of the South generally and southern female identity specifically. Pointing to the "annihilating" effects of domestic regulation especially for women, Scott condemns a culture that refuses to acknowledge its production of essentially genteel, female corpses. Scott's fiction suggests that women's bodies predetermine their deadly situation; for Scott, "anatomy is destiny."²⁶ Caught in the narrow houses structuring their culture, individual women seemingly can do little to resist becoming domesticated corpses. What Scott proposes is necessary--but what she cannot successfully illustrate--is a radical restructuring of domesticity, a task taken up by the writers who follow her.

"She's All Made Up: The Masquerading Fiction of Frances Newman," Chapter 3, suggests that by understanding

²⁶See Smith 12.

the female body as a social text, Newman opened up possibilities for revising women's bodies and stories. Though she points to the same kinds of social regulation of female corporeality that Scott discusses, Newman celebrates the woman's body's ability to resist and overturn stifling domestic constructions of women. By parodically performing cultural versions of femininity, women can participate in revising and expanding their own identities and stories. The practice of masquerade as promoting social change, however, has limitations which are evidenced by the flapper, the subject of the next chapter.

"Dancing and Domesticity: Competing Stories of the Southern Flapper" evaluates how the figure of the flapper disrupts definitions of the lady and belle precisely because of her represented corporeality. Though the flapper was embroiled in a cultural debate that ultimately absorbed her disruptions and erased her as an important regional image of privileged white womanhood, Zelda Fitzgerald uses the flapper in fiction to theorize bodily resistance to domesticity and an expansion of the woman's sense of self through dance. Fitzgerald's novel indicates that such resistance and self-expansion cannot help but be painful--the resistant body produced through dance is battered and

bruised--but is preferable to the dead body and self that Fitzgerald, like Scott, thought domesticity produced.

A fifth chapter, "Katherine Anne Porter's 'Mangled Creatures': Disfiguring the Feminine and Fleeing the Domestic," returns to the dilemma that confronted Scott: how fully can an individual woman resist her culture's prescriptions for female identity? Like Scott, Porter critiques the social order by unearthing the corpses and mangled bodies she sees buried in domesticity. But by depicting Miranda Gay's continual flight, Porter allows that, however unlikely, some women might avoid re-enacting the stories of their mothers.

The works of the writers I examine present discursive bodies that revise domestic stories, and at the same time, they offer textual revisions of domestic stories that give rise to new conceptions of bodies for southern white women. In "authoring bodies," they reimagine their world and reimagine themselves.

CHAPTER 2

WOMEN "HEDGED AND HEMMED IN": EVELYN SCOTT'S NARROW HOUSES

Once, while we were living in Russellville, my mother, who had been out afternoon-calling, entered our yard (she was looking so pretty in her grey broad-cloth gown with her ostrich-plumed hat and her furs and violets, that I remember it still), and discovered me squatting in the grass, digging violently and laboriously with a large tin spoon. Questioned on my preoccupation, I explained to her that I did not like Russellville and was digging to reach China, which I understood to be at the other side of the world. I think this began an adventure, which has always had a somewhat desperate character, and is not yet done. I was like a trapped rat, forging a way through obstacles with a new burrow! Like a convict frenziedly employing a pocketknife as he seeks for freedom through ten yards of solid masonry with a guarded continent beyond! I wanted to get out, and be able to arrive somewhere else--on the other side of the strange taboos and inscrutable injunctions which hedged and hemmed me in.¹

This passage does not begin Evelyn Scott's autobiography, but it easily could; Scott's departure from her mother's genteel world with its "strange taboos and inscrutable injunctions" is well documented.² "Dixie has seldom had a

¹Evelyn Scott, Background in Tennessee (1937; Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1980) 118-19. Subsequent parenthetical references to BT will be to this volume.

²See Mary Wheeling White, Fighting the Current: The Life and Work of Evelyn Scott (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1997) and D.A. Callard, "Pretty Good for a Woman": The Enigmas of Evelyn Scott (New York: Norton, 1985).

more rebellious daughter," Joseph Flora notes: "By the age of thirteen, Scott had virtually thundered 'no' to the expectations of her culture and class."³

But as much as it explains the direction of her life, this passage from Background in Tennessee illuminates a motive of Scott's fiction. Her novels critique traditional domestic order to condemn the immurement, particularly for women, that Scott recognized as implicit in marriage and family structures. A contemporary reviewer of Scott's work charged that

nothing is sacred to [Scott]. Female virtue, the sanctity of the home, patriotism, religion, art, and even the 'code of honor' . . . she puts through an acid bath and lifts them out in rags and shreds.⁴

This "daughter of Dixie" distrusted her region and its codes, her family and its stories: "I somehow always thought they were lying. And decided . . . belligerently, that I, at any rate, would tell the truth" (BT 284). Telling her version of the truth and searching for "other-world" possibilities for female identity, Scott's life and

³Joseph M. Flora, "Fiction in the 1920s: Some New Voices," The History of Southern Literature, eds. Louis D. Rubin, Jr., et al. (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1985) 285-86.

⁴Isabel Paterson, "Five Patterns of Behaviorism," New York Herald Tribune Books 23 October 1927: 4.

corrosive writing flaunted southern standards of decorum and domesticity that "hedged and hemmed" women in.

By the time Scott was buried in an unmarked grave in the fall of 1963, however, her life was already forgotten and her fiction out of print. The erasure of Scott's place in American letters is puzzling, the result of a disastrous play of circumstances explored in Mary Wheeling White's recent Fighting the Current: The Life and Work of Evelyn Scott. Certainly a literary force in her day, between 1920 and 1940, Scott published nineteen volumes of fiction, autobiography, and poetry, as well as numerous short stories and critical articles on art and politics. She quickly established a reputation among her contemporaries as an important modernist writer, the only female writer, in fact, to earn William Faulkner's (begrudging) praise.⁵ Critics compared her favorably to D.H. Lawrence, Dorothy Richardson, and Virginia Woolf⁶; indeed, Faulkner's publishers boldly suggested that The Sound and the Fury should "place William

⁵See Callard 116.

⁶See Carl Van Doren, "Broad and Narrow House," The Literary Review 15 July 1922: 804; Sinclair Lewis, review of The Narrow House, New York Times Book Review 13 March 1921: 18; and see Peggy Bach, "Evelyn Scott: The Woman in the Foreground," The Southern Review 18.4 (1982): 712.

Faulkner in company with Evelyn Scott."⁷ The comparison makes sense; in 1925, The Saturday Review of Literature reported that it knew "of no writer upon rain, animal passion, grief, hogs, mud, sweat, and futility, who c[ould] hold a stylistic candle to Evelyn Scott."⁸ Though Scott succeeded in traveling as far geographically and socially from her Tennessee birthplace as she could get, reviewers found in her fiction either "the articulate voice of the New South" or "an act of treachery toward the 'real' South."⁹ Her vision, people assented, was ruthless; some did not see the trait as admirable in a southern woman.

This chapter will trace Evelyn Scott's vexed vision of region and gender through a memoir-based history (Background in Tennessee [1937]), an autobiographical novel (Eva Gay [1933]), and Scott's first-published fiction, a trilogy (The Narrow House [1921], Narcissus [1922], and The Golden Door [1925]). Together, these works develop Scott's bleak definition of southern womanhood trapped by domestic

⁷Foreword to "On William Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury" by Evelyn Scott, advertising pamphlet for The Sound and the Fury (New York: Cape and Smith, 1929).

⁸Review of The Golden Door, The Saturday Review of Literature 30 May 1925: 796.

⁹Jonathan Daniels, "Old Wine in New Bottles," The Saturday Review of Literature 15 April 1933: 537; Evelyn Scott is here citing reviewers, Background in Tennessee 2.

regulation transmitted through and for the family; southern women, Scott advances, are in service to a domestic economy that strips them of their subjectivities and capabilities. The caustic "truth" promoted by her writing is this: in a region holding fast to ideals of domestic womanhood, women's bodies signify only its corruption and decay. Ultimately, her fiction cannot escape the very codes that she condemns; the perverse traits of southern womanhood that Scott identifies--the "self-annihilation" and narcissism resulting when women perceive woman as object, image and icon--are apparently so foundational to Scott's definition of womanhood that Scott can do little but enumerate dead bodies and deadened identities. Trapped in narrow houses, Scott's women maintain and perpetuate the very domestic structures that entomb them; the writer only portrays and thus critiques the situation.

Scott's stake in such a portrayal was, as this chapter's opening passage from Background in Tennessee suggests, quite personal. Finally, writing her way out of southern codes and customs was for Scott as impossible as digging to China with a spoon. Scott's collective attempts at a "break-out" produced a story of womanhood that has a "somewhat desperate character, and is not yet done"--was, in fact, never fully "done" because her story never ended in

liberation (BT 118). ("[E]xpatriatism is a myth," she insisted [BT 2].) She kept digging, however. Scott said that she wrote a book-length account of her girlhood woven into a history of Tennessee to determine just what prompted people to decidedly label her a southerner even though she had left the South permanently when she was twenty (BT 4). Indeed, Background in Tennessee is the work that most directly excavates the relationship between Scott's southern roots and her sense of identity. Bodies and the codes they carry are so central to Scott's definition of regional identity that in the book's opening pages, Scott points to her ambivalent understanding and representation of herself as southern by reference to a bodily "spectacle": "I wonder," Scott writes,

which, if any, of the signs [that people who, upon introduction, guess that she is southern] are reading can be attributed to my rather startling first recollection of a human figure--that of a dark-skinned man, entirely naked except for the white cloth nicely snaring his middle! An Indian, in fact. . . .(BT 4)

Why would her conception of this Native American body be foundational to Scott's consideration of herself as a southern woman? Her recall of the image is strategic, preparing readers for a resistance-based "counter-history." Textually, Scott's reminiscence of this dark-skinned figure introduces an account of Tennessee's settling, a history

which Scott tells primarily through the experiences and actions of her forefathers. So long is her elaboration of this patrilineal history (twenty pages) that the reader could forget about the figure that spurred the narratorial aside--for it is a lengthy aside that retells the normative history of her native state. When she returns at chapter's end to the long-deferred image of what she now insists is "her" Indian, Scott refocuses the representation of his body to challenge the narratives of privileged white men that precede and surround that dark body.

"My Indian," she insists, was not merely a parlor-room representation, but "flesh and blood! Lithe and living and almost stark naked . . ." (BT 27). "[H]is bronze body, with its liquid muscles, moving with a gliding strength and sureness" contrasts so markedly from the bodies of "gentlemen in hard derbies and choker collars; gentlemen in little short-tailed jackets and tubelike trousers; gentlemen in morning coats with spats and lavender gloves"--very civil men who, with their own bodies tightly cloaked in the trappings of gentility and society, engender "settling" narratives that depend upon suppressing or expelling native (and natural) bodies (BT 28). For Scott, the Native American's (represented) corporeality suggests the incompleteness and inaccuracies of a patriarchal history

that suppresses bodies--white men's bodies cloaked with civility, white women's bodies genteelly erased--at the same time that it suggests other possibilities of being. While I am not arguing that Scott's rhetorical appropriation (and romanticization) of the Native American body is emancipatory, particularly for dark-skinned people, Scott's representation of the dark body does enable her to begin to theorize a de-centering of "standard" history and to question what roles bodies play in the construction of particular identities and stories.

In subsequent chapters, Scott makes similar use of the privileged white female body, a body that she perceived as marginalized and suppressed by her culture. In fact, the lady's body becomes central to her historical account; Background in Tennessee foregrounds experiences specific to the female body, discussing alongside traditional history, menstruation, maternity, sexuality, pregnancy, women's desire, and the fashioning of the upper-class feminine body.¹⁰ By repeatedly inserting representations of the

¹⁰In her afterword, Dorothy Scura notes that the speaker in Scott's earlier "autobiographical volume" Escapade (1923; Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1995) engages in a "desperate struggle to write the female body" (310) but Scott's publisher, Thomas Seltzer, censored the book, erasing, Scott says, all physical statements about pregnancy . . . , all remarks about giving milk or other indecencies. I do think if women had any guts they would even at

female body and its functions, as well as her personal memories of girlhood, into a fact- and father-based historical account of the founding and development of Tennessee, Scott challenges a normative history that had privileged patriarchal male experience over female and had denied the presence of privileged white women's corporealities.¹¹ Background in Tennessee exposes the suppressed bodies--bodies female and white as well as dark-skinned bodies--essential to a fuller story of the South.

To be sure, the history that Scott writes is not one depicting female liberation (or racial equality); unlike the

their worst protest against this stuff that maternity is a mental experience. It is the most beautifully damnably concrete sensuous thing on earth and the treacle of sentiment is only a weak after effect. (qtd. in Scura, afterword to Escapade, 312)

The content of censored passages, according to Scura, refers to toilets, the effect of pregnancy and maternity on the speaker's body, and the speaker's feelings of sexual desire and pleasure (313-14). Scura also notes that though Escapade is set during the First World War, Scott "chose to detail instead the experiences of pregnancy, childbirth, pain, isolation, and despair" of the young speaker (288). In both autobiographies, Scott clearly felt committed to revise history in accordance with specifically female experiences.

¹¹Scott's experimental novel about the Civil War, The Wave (1929; Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1996), repeats this strategy in fiction; alongside narratives from the perspectives of Lincoln and Lee, who consider battle strategies and national events, Scott places the stories of "everyday" women. The novel thus aligns the importance of the female experience in wartime with that of even historic men's experiences.

Indian body, the female bodies she presents never suggest freedom from the genteel world but mark women's entrapment. Scott grew up, after all, in an environment in which women had "only [one] serious career," marriage, and girls, "attending parties in a professional spirit," remained "girls" all the years between "puberty and the attainment of their goal in marriage," no matter how long that might be (BT 269, 273). Training for their womanly career started early: girls of Scott's station were taught to "trip[] forth politely, with [their] miniature cardcases, and under adult supervision, call[] on one another formally, like polite 'little ladies'" (BT 265). But through its exposure of the strict regulation of female bodies, Scott's history critiques the conventional domestic relations that in Scott's view feed the repression of southern women.

The southern female body Scott unearths is subject to extreme social regulation. She remembers learning that her body was something to be suppressed, something that made her feel vaguely ashamed. In a domestic space, and especially when men or boys were present, Scott's body made her feel, she said, "as though [she] had, continually, to accumulate evidence which would prove [her] 'not guilty.'" Though [she] never really knew of what [she] felt [her]self to be accused" (BT 284). Specifically because she was an upper-

class white girl, she had to avoid mention of the body or bodily functions. Such repression of the white female body helped sustain a racist hierarchy of identities in the South: that she must "dare[] ask in a whisper to go to a certain place which well-reared children (it had been obscurely indicated) should not refer to in public aloud," heightened her envy of the black servants' connection to what she perceived of at the time as a liberated and "animal enjoyment of life" (BT 81). "[A]ll authorities which tried to rule your mind, fixed, as accommodation to themselves, the limitations of your search for truth. And the restrictions were imposed most heavily if you were born a girl," Scott wrote.¹²

Scott's 1933 autobiographical novel, Eva Gay, illustrates that the privileged girl's recognition of and questioning about her body was absolutely taboo; in fact, it is this lesson about the female body that opens the novel. If the five-year old Eva

asked [her parents] so much as one question relating to her own body and its functions, she was invariably silenced. That made her ashamed of a body; and she hated being ashamed. These were matters which could not interest nice little girls. Or perhaps her mother put her off with remarks which described the indentation in the middle of her abdomen as a "bread basket" and the

¹²Evelyn Scott, Eva Gay (New York: Smith & Haas, 1933) 773. Subsequent references to EG will be to this text.

pink circles prominent upon her chest as "mosquito bites." (EG 5)

Because her mother puts her off with misinformation, Eva and her neighborhood friend, Susie Dillon, steal away to the garden shed to study their bodies and piece together scant facts. There, aware that her parents think of her as "so sweet and pure," "Eva was conscious of deceit and misery, but thrilled. It was as if she expected to be struck dead by knowledge" (EG 7, 6). When Eva's mother catches them in their hiding place, "Eva . . . caught nude, like this, in her discoveries, was mute, shiveringly still" (EG 6). Her mother pronounces Eva "debased!" and threatens to send her daughter to a reformatory (EG 7-8). Instead, to punish Eva's transgression into the forbidden territory of the girl's own body, Eva's mother binds her daughter to a chair and beats her, refusing to release her until the restrained girl admits that she is "ashamed" (EG 10).

"Silenced" when she asks questions about her body and forced to be "mute" and "ashamed" when she explores the female body, Eva is disciplined to avoid articulating the experiences of her body freely (EG 5, 6, 10). The physical restraint imposed after the girl has been caught discussing bodies and sexuality--binding--symbolizes the motive of the discipline, to contain and restrict the privileged girl's body. The description of the effects of her punishment

emphasizes that the girl's ultimate experience is indeed bodily and psychic consumption and contraction (a contraction which directly contrasts the expansion of self that Eva had hoped to experience through her explorations)--her "hot spine pressed rigidly" into the chair, "her throat contracted," her "vacant stomach gnawed," her "marrow burned," "her feet stamped . . . fretfully," "she writhed," and where "the skipping rope [that her mother used to tie her to the chair] had scored her arms. . . . [was] like scalds" (EG 9). Yet, the narrative insists, Eva "was nothing. . . . She did not feel" (EG 9).

Scott's work shows that coupled with the alienation of the female body brought about by parental discipline and social regulation was a sexual objectification brought about by the "demands made by southern custom" (BT 264). Scott succinctly recalls her knowledge at a young age that the southern white woman's appearance determines her success:

It seems improbable that a child in the North would have been aware, as I was before I was seven, that Santa Claus, for example, though his supernatural powers elevated him to the status of the angels, was, also, a man. Yet I remember clearly a Christmas Eve after the sacrifice of my chief adornment to malaria [her hair had been cropped some months earlier as part of the treatment], when my mother, in despair over my appearance and anxious to have me shine at the next day's festivities, sent me to bed with my hair done in curlers improvised from strips of soft rag. Something warned me not to object openly against the libellous effect she was

willing to let me make on Saint Nicholas; but I had in mind the jacket design on The Night Before Christmas, and, while I hung up my stocking, rebelled privately against an invidious comparison the expected nocturnal visitor was bound to make between a little girl whose head was encircled by disgusting humps and knobs, and that chubby-cheeked, golden-orioled sum of infant perfections depicted by an artist. And as soon as my mother, ingenuously oblivious to the havoc she had wrought, had kissed me and left me to what she imagined would be innocently selfish dreams of gifts, I snatched off the curlers, and, settling myself upon the pillow carefully, arranged my locks in such a fashion as to make the utmost of their temporary paucity. In my realistic conception of things, I was rewarded for my cautious foresight--it was the Christmas I received a dollhouse which, to this very moment, seems to me like the apotheosis of all dollhouses, and even far superior to the Queen's. (BT 263-4)

Although Scott seemingly resists bodily regulation, her mother's tying of her hair, she loosens her curls for the same reasons her mother binds them, and in a similar state of "despair" and "anxi[ety]." Her concern is the same as her mother's, that she should look like a doll, a conception reinforced culturally (by the book jacket from The Night Before Christmas) and by her mother's anxious efforts to enhance her daughter's public appearance. Scott is certain that girls do not get gifts from men--even jolly old benevolent men--unless they look attractive. Her "realistic conception of things" is that the more attractive she is, the greater the reward. Thus, she attempts to recreate a studied portrait of herself as the artistic "sum of infant

perfections," imagining how she will appear to the male eye when she is "arranged" on the pillow. Her attempt at pleasing her "man" is successful: she earns a "reward" ironically appropriate for a little girl who plays the part of a doll so well--a dollhouse. Scott thus depicts a South that disciplines women to be cut off from their own bodily experiences but also aware of the profit in objectifying their bodies for another's pleasure. That is, Scott reveals a South that produces alienated bodies when it constructs femininity.

While such "premature concern for male opinion may strike the Yankee as only idiosyncratic and perverse," Scott claims that "southern custom" compelled her response (BT 264). She maintains that her experience was not unique: "the background for my behaviour was general suggestion, which affected other children, too" (BT 264). Scott insists, "[A]ll little southern girls, as I remember them, were almost frighteningly precocious in developing sex-consciousness" (BT 265). Their training for courtship varies only in detail:

For me, pervasive innuendoes were embodied in a jovial, portly bachelor called Mr. Blakeman, who had claimed me as his sweetheart from the age of three. He owned a dry goods store; and when my mother took me with her on a shopping tour, would pounce upon me from the door of his emporium, decoy me in with gifts of chocolates and peppermints, swing me to a vacant counter, and

entice me into giving recitations from the works of Eugene Field, before an audience of males who always laughed uproariously. The pact between us was sealed finally when I received from him a little silver "friendship bracelet" with a jewelled, heart-shaped lock engraved: "with Blakeman's love." And once, on Sunday, he invited me to drive with him behind a tandem pair which he manipulated dashingly. I wore a new blue cashmere frock from New Orleans, and carried, for the first time, a small blue silk parasol with pale pink frills; and proudly, almost suffocated by the steaming bulk which towered beside me in the narrow seat of his smart vehicle, endured an ordeal of discomfort compensated for by the display. (BT 264-5)

The girl learns to view herself as a sexual object appropriately enough in a marketplace where she performs for and receives favors from men, launching her "professional career" as a belle. The young Scott's education culminates in her learning to sit in her "narrow seat" where she feels "almost suffocated" and dwarfed by the man's body. For the young Scott, awareness of herself as spectacle "compensate[s]" for the sensation of physical restraint; she is proud of her transition into a mature role, a transition signified by being the well-dressed object of courtly male attention. But for the woman, as Scott's Eva Gay shows, the courtship economy's "pacts" lead inevitably to an annihilation of subjectivity.

For instance, when Eva Gay first falls in love, she stands in front of a mirror:

She shaped her lips to recollections of each kiss he [Walter Ford] gave. She smoothed her hair as he had smoothed her hair, and rethought how his eyes had looked, and tried to feel as he had felt, and be, before the image of her curiosity, as she had been to him. Her own emotions were left well alone. But his and how she must appear to him! Insatiably she did her best to become him, that she might measure what it was made her preferred. If that were learned--since she'd do anything he liked--she might always be his! (EG 58)

This passage expresses the same action as Background in Tennessee's Santa passage (an internalized male gaze guides the girls' conceptions of themselves as they work to become pleasing objects), but here, the adolescent Eva's reward is not to receive a dollhouse, but to become her lover's doll. Repressing the expression of her own desire, Eva deliberately objectifies herself, consciously replacing her perspective with Walter's to see herself reflected more clearly as a (more or less) desirable object. When Walter seemingly rejects her, then, she turns to the mirror again, only to see herself negatively: "She even felt repugnance for the colour of her hair, and for the frightened, silly eyes which stared out from the bathroom looking-glass. And for her thin, anemic face. . . . Her body, though, she hated most!" (EG 79). Only Walter's desire for her enabled to take "pleasure in the spectacle" of her body rather than "to be embarrassed by the sight" of it: "While Walter wanted her, she liked herself. Now that brief tolerance was gone"

(EG 79). "If she could just be blotted out!" she thinks (EG 79).

When Walter does not show up for their last meeting before Eva leaves town, she again retreats to the mirror to assess herself. In the train's washroom, "[f]rom four odd angles, looking-glasses repetitiously reflected her. She could not bear the sight. She hid her face" (EG 91). Viewing her own body multiplied prompts Eva's desire for death; only the man can grant Eva a way of perceiving body and self that yields a satisfactory identity (as a doll, as his desire). She cannot bear to see her own reflection outside of a courtship economy.

Eva Gay stresses that Eva's reactions are not merely the fleeting, despondent response of a lovesick girl, for Eva repeats this pattern years later with Evan, an artist who will become her final lover:

She had no wish but to be as he wanted her. At this instant, whatever he desired of her became herself. There was no ecstasy in her own flesh, save as she imagined the abrupt rapture he displayed in holding her. And she was with him, in himself, in what had driven him to her. She loved the body he had come to find, for it was glorified because he wanted it. His fiercely awkward caresses created what had never been before. (EG 643)

Here, the man creates the woman's perception of her body, as though she can find her repressed body only through him. But she cannot locate her own body, her own desire, her own

"ecstasy"--only Evan's. Eva insists that "her own mouth . . . belonged to [Evan], not her" (EG 714). In Evan's company, "her body became opulent. . . . She was nothing, and yet all there was. In her heart, she was doing willing murder to herself. She felt like woman; and not Eva Gay" (EG 722). Not surprisingly, Eva Gay associates sex with death, a state in which she achieves "literal annihilation" (EG 601). In sexual relation to a man, she becomes "woman"--and seemingly essentialized "woman" only as imagined by a man--and loses any sense of her particular identity as "Eva Gay."¹³ Indeed, when Evan abandons Eva, she addresses the absent Evan, "I am you. That is all I am" (EG 750). Eva's very name is swallowed up by his:

For Scott, the woman's "doing willing murder to herself" in love relationships results from the way that southern culture construed and constructed womanhood for a domestic order (EG 722). Not surprisingly, Scott's first novel critiques her native region and its mores by illustrating the annihilating effects of domesticity and

¹³Eva Gay also identifies the maternal position to be similarly self-abnegating: when Eva "longed to be, and could not be, more self-annihilating than she was," she "then . . . imagined [Evan as] her child--so young!--though he was older than she was--and kissed the gilded softness of his hair" (EG 721). To be "woman" in Eva's world--to be lover to a man, mother to a child--is to annihilate the self.

marriage, particularly for women. The first volume of a trilogy that explores three generations of a Southern family, The Narrow House points to a crumbling social order undergoing a limited and ultimately inconsequential transformation: one house, "the disheveled building at the corner," is being renovated, and its construction debris "lay on the dusty sidewalk in a glaring heap."¹⁴ The "old-fashioned house next door," the Farley house,

was as badly in need of improvements as the one undergoing alterations. The dingy brick walls were streaked by the drippage from the leaky tin gutter that ran along the roof. The massive shutters, thrown back from the long windows, were rotting away. Below the lifted panes very clean worn curtains hung slack like things exhausted by the heat. (NH 7)

The "old-fashioned" domestic structure stamped with exhaustion and decay is clearly the "narrow house" that the novel's title suggests, and the novel details how its walls entomb the residents in a living death of rigid conventions.

Steven Ryan observes that The Narrow House is "not held together as much by plot structure or characterization as by the atmosphere of the house itself" but misses the potential power of such an image by limiting its decay to just the Farley family. He suggests that Scott's novel comments only

¹⁴Evelyn Scott, The Narrow House (New York: Norton, 1921) 7. Subsequent parenthetical references to NH are to this volume.

on "a loveless marriage, of a home" rather than a stifling and decaying domestic order.¹⁵ Ryan notes that nearly all of the novel's action occurs within the house, "emphasiz[ing] stagnation and paralysis within the [Farley] family."¹⁶ But when the text portrays places throughout the community--a butcher shop, a farmhouse, an apartment, a diner, a train, houses lining a street--it suggests death and corruption extending beyond the Farleys and into the broader society itself. For example, a waiter with the "fat . . . hand of a corpse" is the "ghost" who serves Mr. Farley at an eatery where "[f]lies buzzed against the walls and fell back upon the half-washed table coverings" (NH 140); Horace Ridge's apartment "closed [Horace and Alice] like a coffin" (NH 105); and Laurence notes that houses on his street are all "like dead things" (NH 66). The Farley house is just one symbol of the old structures throughout southern society that are "rotten" and, Scott proposes, in urgent need of some extensive renovation. The novel's portrayal of the Farley family is an assault on conventional society.

The Narrow House points more particularly to the need to reconstruct southern women's bodies, however, when it

¹⁵Steven T. Ryan, "The Terroristic Universe of The Narrow House," The Southern Quarterly 28.4 (1990): 36, 39.

¹⁶Ryan 37.

suggests that the domestic realm traditionally defining women's identities needs substantial "alteration[]." The text repeatedly links women with the houses that keep them. Thus, even before we know her name, the woman who emerges from the Farley house is immediately identified with the house: she stands "before the clumsy dark green door" to read the mail which she then places "clumsily . . . [back] where she had found" it (NH 7-8). Mrs. Farley's son's perspective articulates the close relation of women's bodies to houses:

The houses with lowered blinds were secret and filled with women. Girls going to work came out of the houses like the words of women. Women going to market passed slowly before him with their baskets. Pregnant women walked before him in confidence. The uncolored atmosphere threw back the sky. It was the mirror of women. Laurence felt crowded between the bodies of women and houses. He walked quickly with his head bent.

On the concrete pavements, washed white as bones by the storm of the night before, were rust-colored puddles. Dark and still, they quivered now and again, like quiet minds touched by the horror of a recollection. The reflections of the houses lay deep in them, shattered, like dead things. (NH 66)

Approaching his own house, Laurence thinks of the "purple-red walls that held [his wife] Winnie," linking the house's interior with the interiority of his wife's body and her sexuality (NH 94).

Clearly, such passages mean to show Laurence's unease with women and domestic life, but his association of women

and houses is not isolated. If Laurence felt merely "crowded between the bodies of women and houses" (NH 66), in Narcissus, the second volume of the trilogy, Laurence's second wife, Julia, feels "crushed between the walls and bright windows of the houses" whose rooftops allow the sky to show only "narrowly."¹⁷ The narrative of The Narrow House itself metaphorizes women's bodies, especially their sexualized bodies, with domestic structures. The curtains in Winnie's bedroom suggest her sexuality on the morning that she tries to seduce her husband:

The white curtains seemed stained with the pinkish-brown light. They swayed and parted and between their folds the moist air flowed heavily from the steaming street. . . . The curtains opened like lips and made a whispering noise. (NH 61)

The curtains in the bedroom window of Winnie's sister-in-law, the unmarried Alice, accentuate Alice's sense of stifled sexuality. Walking home from work, Alice considers the house undergoing renovation and sees through the "smeared windowpanes . . . empty rooms blank as the faces of idiot women waiting for love." She then looks to "her own windows where the awnings did not stir" but were "drooping" (NH 71). In her "tomb[like]" bedroom that night, while her "hot will sought for a world to impregnate," the "wet wind

¹⁷Evelyn Scott, Narcissus (1922; New York: Arno, 1977) 165. Subsequent references to N will be to this volume.

beat the soggy awnings against the glass. A dank smell came in" (NH 82-3).

Tying female sexuality to windows--openings that are not points of access or departure--signifies the women's enclosed and "cut off" positions; Mrs. Farley, her daughter Alice, and daughter-in-law Winnie all press up against the panes, helpless. As Alice's drooping awnings make clear, power is tied to male sexual potency: Alice wants to "impregnate," but the feminine role (aligned with idiocy) designates that she "wait[] for love" to inhabit her. The novel suggests that the structure of relations between men and women deadens women, their own bodies entombing them. This is true even for Alice, the character who holds the most potential to reform the image of the southern woman.

Alice could seem to offer a way out of the domination of the old order, for while others "moved in the heaviness of circles, . . . Alice's movements were always angular and resistant" (NH 154). She avoids the matrimonial bonds which seemingly entrap her parents and Laurence and Winnie; advocating that loveless bonds be broken, Alice even attempts to force her parents to separate. She at least imagines other domestic arrangements.

But Alice, the "emancipated" female character, cannot relinquish conventionally patriarchal ways of seeing

herself. She couples "ugly old maid" with "emancipation of women" even in her own mind (NH 139). Although she refuses to attempt to make herself as she once did "into something men would like," she still uses the mirror and an internalized male gaze as standards by which she measures her worth and meaning: she "avoid[s] the mirror" because "she did not want to realize what she was" (NH 32). "[Standing] before the glass," she sees a "[h]omely woman" and "hat[es] herself" (NH 34, 35). "Her horror of herself crept over her body, shameful because of no use. . . . Her body oppressed her" (NH 35). Thus, the courtship economy defines even the unmarried woman: labeled an "old maid," she spends her days feeling defeated and frustrated. Alice mirrors the adjacent house currently under repair; its "vacant windows smeared with paint gave the house the look of a silly face smeared with weeping, an expression of tortured immobility" (NH 60). Alice too looks "ludicrous"--a word that she uses repeatedly to describe herself. Even this "remodeled" version of the southern woman is vacant, Scott insists.

But worse are the ruinous identities of Mrs. Farley, the self-sacrificial mother, and Winnie, the narcissistic belle and perhaps the namesake of Winnie Davis, Jefferson Davis's daughter, "popularly known as 'the daughter of the

Confederacy.'"¹⁸ Marriage, or at least sex, and motherhood ("maternity [being] the most important phase of sex" [EG 773]) deaden these women. Laurence submits to his wife's pleas to "love me" only when she is most like a corpse, her eyes "wide open and sightless," her body "rigid upon the white sheet in the dark bed" (NH 94). With intercourse, her corpse-like qualities intensify: she "congealed in agony. She fell away from him. She was cold. She was still" (NH 95). Their second sexual encounter in the text is a murder; Laurence approaches Winnie calculatingly, "If I take her again she will die" (NH 97). As he copulates, his "veins swelled with death. Then he became the death-giver, glad, in spite of himself, of the drunkenness of moving with the unseen" (NH 98). Scott frames sex as annihilation for women with men as conscious annihilators.

Indeed, in Narcissus, fifteen-year-old May Farley's first sexual encounter (May, Winnie and Laurence's daughter, is raped by Paul, whom she will eventually marry) certifies that the woman's awareness of her body, granted through sex, is awareness of her body as a corpse:

¹⁸Elsie L. Smith, "Belle Kinney and the Confederate Women's Monument," The Southern Quarterly 32.4 (1994): 7. Smith notes that Winnie symbolized ideal Confederate womanhood well into the second decade of the twentieth century.

She was dead already, shriveled in the cold heat. She pushed at him feebly. She could scarcely hear her own words that told him to stop. They were just a low buzzing from her cold dead lips. Paul was making her aware of herself, of her body that she did not know, that now she could never forget. (N 120-2)

"She tried to imagine that, because she was ugly and impure, Paul had already killed her. The strangeness and exaltation she felt came to her because she was dead. She loved him for destroying her" (N 133).

Despite the heavy coding of these texts, sex alone does not destroy women. In The Narrow House, men and children consume women's bodies. It is the pregnancy that results from sexual relations with Laurence that ultimately kills Winnie: the "living child . . . had come to consume her" (NH 145). Dismemberment for others' nourishment marks the maternal role: to prepare dinner, Mrs. Farley ventures back and forth from the butcher shop with other "old women [who] crept along in the vague brightness, their backs bent, parcels of half-wrapped bread and bits of bloody meat held preciously to their shrunken breasts or clutched in the knots of their shawls" (NH 125). As Mrs. Farley exits the shop, "a large blue fly rose stupidly and bumped against her face" as though she herself is the butchered flesh of the market (NH 11). A passage describing Winnie's wake indicates most pointedly the collapse of the maternal into

butchered meat. The table is set in the dining room, but only a fly and Winnie's newborn eat:

From somewhere in the cold a fly came and buzzed feebly about the frayed meat on the big sheep bone that lay disconsolately in a congealed pool of amber-white grease in the middle of the glossy blue dish.

. . . The young fly clung to the huge flayed bone of the dead beast. It crawled on moist quivering legs along the dry and fleshless parts, only to slip back uncertainly when it clutched the fat. . . .

The coffin was on a table in the parlor. It had a movable inside which was pushed up so that the shoulders and head of the corpse protruded above the box. . . .

In the nursery, opposite the death chamber, [the hired wet-nurse] sat pressing [Winnie's] infant's lips to the stiff brown nipple on her full white breast. (NH 185-86)

Scott refuses to portray women positively in traditional roles of providing nourishment; instead she couples scenes of women providing sustenance with grotesque images of death and slaughter to suggest that women engaged in traditional mothering activities are themselves being butchered and consumed.¹⁹

Each of The Narrow House's women in turn is revealed to be as "dead" and "shattered" as the reflection of the houses

¹⁹An excerpt from Evelyn Scott's "The Tunnel," a series of poems detailing the relation of mother and child, points to Scott's conception of the terror of giving up body and self through the maternal role:

Little inexorable lips at my breast
 Drink me out of me
 In a fine sharp stream.
 Little hands tear me apart
 To find what they need. (V, 11.1-5)

in her community (NH 66). Even Winnie's child May seems corpse-like, "an unhealthy looking child with lustrous wax-like skin, large, vapid, glazed, blue eyes, and thin, damp curls of gray-blond hair" (NH 11-12). May assumes her position as female to be a kind of relation to death even before she is made aware of her corpse-body through sexual intercourse: when her father "deprecate[s]" her because she is a girl, "[s]omething inside her died faintly. It was like a death at the end of a sickness, a relief which she dimly felt as defeat" (NH 207). The women mirror each other in such defeat. They are, after all, living in "a narrow house," inhabiting "dead" identities that the novel ultimately deems not only unrenovative, but inherited. Winnie Farley is but the younger double of Mrs. Farley, the narcissistic belle before she assumes the identity of self-sacrificial lady. The text further stresses that generations perpetuate the "same" identity: "Lifting her soft strange eyes to her mother, Winnie was double, knowing, as before a mirror, how she looked" (NH 42). Similarly, May mirrors her mother: "As May watched [Winnie cry] she seemed to be weeping from her own eyes her mother's tears" (NH 58).

The novel's opening and closing sections, in fact, stress the stasis of the society. In the novel's opening scene, as we saw, Mrs. Farley goes to the "meat shop . . .

white as death" and a fly "bump[s] against her face" as she leaves (NH 9, 11). And in the text's closing scene, in which Mrs. Farley determines that her son will stay home and remarry and that her husband will not leave her (thus reinstating the domestic order that the action of the novel has temporarily unsettled), a fly again is drawn to Mrs. Farley. As she washes the dishes, it "buzzed fiercely in the luminous dark against the windowpane, then was still, like a spring that had fiercely unwound" (NH 221). Such a "circular" structure suggests a closing in around identity--and the book becomes a narrow house indeed, one that marks the rotten persistence of the old order. The text's characters cannot stop moving "in the heaviness of circles," the repetitions that reinforce the very structure of domesticity that presses in on them (NH 154).

But while The Narrow House illustrates the narrowing of female identities, the final volume, The Golden Door, in title at least, suggests a threshold, a door signaling possible escape. And in fact, The Golden Door focusses on the way that May's nontraditional marriage restructures domesticity and female identity. May is the only female character who appears in all three novels of the trilogy, and I think that through May, Scott imagined the possibility of a "break-out" from a rigid and rigidifying domestic

order. May's very name suggests a possible re-birth, a potential resurrection from The Narrow House's grave female identities. Her name also implies permission, possibility, or ability, as from the Old English "mæg" meaning "to have power" or "be able." This would suggest that May is the figure, not Alice, who would have at least the textual license to realize a revised identity. The month of May, important in both Roman and Celtic fertility rites, was "a 'honey-moon' of sexual freedom" during which time "[m]arriage bonds were temporarily in abeyance" as people coupled in the fields to promote good crops.²⁰ Thus May may suggest a loosening of restrictions and a focus on sex as life-promoting rather than death-inflicting.

The Golden Door does show that May is capable of redefining familial and marital relations. When she consents to her husband's lover's moving into their household, she adopts a way of living that disrupts the domestic order, especially regarding sexual mores. The structure and conditions of the household have been radically tampered with by May and her husband, but their escape from convention is hardly "golden." May, in fact, mostly follows Paul's dictums, lest she lose his love. The

²⁰Barbara G. Walker, The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983) 624.

novel's closing marks how little May is changed from the dead women who preceded her. The last scene of May, her "whole body weak and empty," emphasizes that her heartbeat, which she has been feeling like a tom-tom "thump-thump-thump," suddenly ceases: "the tom-tom beat died in light."²¹ Stilled, May is left with the deadened body that dogged her through each novel.

Only once does May ever seem to approach the promise of her name, a "resurrected" identity. In Narcissus, May

could see a star above the roof and she was in the star filled with thin light. . . . She loved Paul, but he was only a part of the secret city--a part of everything. She did not want to think of him too much. Jesus, everything, she said. I'm Jesus. She shivered at her blasphemy, and was glad. I'm Jesus! I'm Jesus! (N 256)

In order to expand her sense of self, she must recognize that she could not "think of [Paul] too much" and she must blaspheme. More importantly, she must become unhinged from her own corporeality to become a star, to become Christ, as though Scott cannot portray an affirmative or expansive self as embodied. May cannot sustain such a transcendent moment for long, and "[s]he drew herself up in a knot and hid her face" (N 256). This contraction into her own body marks a re-suppression of individual identity. Even if readers see

²¹Evelyn Scott, The Golden Door (New York: Seltzer, 1925) 272.

May's position optimistically as suggestive of "re-birth" (she's in fetal position), she's capable of that rebirth only by rejecting the world, by hiding her face.

Thus, for Scott, privileged women's very bodies, because so over-determined by the culture, ensnare women. That is, women's bodies are so imbricated into society-sustaining institutions that Scott cannot see a way out. Scott's life suggests that a woman, particularly as an artist, may resist deadening social regulation; however, she cannot, Scott seems to suggest, escape the annihilating effects of such regulation in any domestic relationship. The idea that their gendered bodies essentially doom women in patriarchal culture is one that Katherine Anne Porter would return to over a decade later when she unearthed grotesque bodies at the heart of every narrative of domesticity. Scott's work also anticipates the bitter social satire of Frances Newman, who like Scott was well aware that stringent codes of domesticity restricted women's self-expression. And Scott's efforts to frame corporeality as resistance forerun Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald's vision of the flapper's and dancer's socially disruptive bodies. That Scott finally could not celebrate women's bodies does not lessen the significance of her pioneering efforts to expose the systems and structures that "hemmed" women in.

CHAPTER 3

SHE'S ALL MADE UP: THE MASQUERADING FICTION OF FRANCES NEWMAN

"There are no masks to uncover because paradoxically there are only masks, only roles and communal expectations."¹

"These are all my new literary opinions, but I have quite a lot of new clothes that I like very much."²

Frances Newman, a librarian, critic, and novelist who lived most of her life in Atlanta, was a southern white woman of patrician background--the daughter of a respected U.S. district judge and descendant of two prominent families. Yet Newman was bent upon changing what it meant to be a lady in the South. Her work satirized the cultural controls over the female body that aimed to produce a woman in her "proper" place, and her writing generated alternative definitions of southern womanhood disruptive to normative domestic stories. While Newman's female characters superficially seem to reflect a conventional femininity, Newman's representation of their experiences refutes the

¹Sidonie Smith, Subjectivity, Identity, and the Body: Women's Autobiographical Practices in the Twentieth Century (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1993) 15.

²Frances Newman, letter to Hansell Baugh, 10 June 1926, Frances Newman's Letters, ed. Hansell Baugh (New York: Horace Liveright, 1929) 190.

naturalness (as well as the soundness) of the identities they enact. Exposing privileged white women as constructions, particularly as the products of a patriarchal ideology, Newman's novels denaturalize conventional narratives of love, marriage, and motherhood and thus subvert domestic stories that control women's bodies and identities. They expand the possibilities of female identity by strategically adopting a stance of difference best articulated through the idea of masquerade. To view Newman's work through the theoretical framework of masquerade allows us to see the parodic nature of her representation of gender more clearly as disruptive, as discounting essentialist notions of "true womanhood" while also celebrating women's potentials through their bodies' and identities' being "all made up."

In January 1928, Frances Newman sent a letter to Albert H. Gross, who was handling the proofs of her second novel, Dead Lovers Are Faithful Lovers. In it, she meticulously reminded Gross of her preferences concerning the book's printing, stressing her professional ability. There would not "be any trouble," she cordially determined, as long as the publisher complied with her version of the manuscript:

With [the revised copy of the first half of the manuscript], I sent some requests about the printing of the book. Then when this first half came back to me, I noticed that it had been marked

for the printer, differently. The script is spelled according to the Concise Oxford Dictionary, and if the printers will follow the copy, I do not think there will be any trouble, since I have been very careful about confirming usages, even in the matter of hyphens. Also, I asked them to notice that I do not want the word god capitalized, as it is not used in that sense, and I do not want pronouns referring to deities capitalized. And I do not want the chapters numbered, or distinguished in any way except by beginning low down on a new page. And please don't let them put The End at the end, or brackets around the page numbers--in short, I don't want anything that doesn't have to be there.³

Her letter implies that her manuscript already contains everything that ought "to be there"; her instructions claim her right of authority. This, however, is the way that Newman closes her letter: "I hope all these desires won't give you very much trouble--but I expect you already know all about the vagaries of lady authors." Oddly, the letter ends by suddenly assuming a self-deprecating posture about Newman's "requests" and her authority to make them. The nerviness, the almost self-assured cockiness, of the first part of her letter unfolds into a polite reversal: she--not the printers, proofers, or publishers--is the "trouble" herself. Newman's unconditional "requests" become Newman's "desires," then her "vagaries," the serious directives concerning her work translating at letter's end into

³Frances Newman, letter to Albert H. Gross, 31 January 1928, Frances Newman's Letters, 308.

feminine whims, what the Oxford English Dictionary calls "erratic play[s] of fancy," the mere "eccentric notion[s]" of a lady.⁴

A year later, in 1929, French psychoanalyst Joan Rivière would publish "Womanliness as a Masquerade." Her article suggests that a pronounced enactment of femininity allows women--especially ambitious intellectual women--to cloak their capacities and thereby retain some power in a culture organized in part by curbing women's authority. Rivière's research, based on a case study of a privileged woman from the American South, seems especially pertinent to the 1920s South Newman inhabited, where, as historian Anne Firor Scott points out, ladylike behavior was carefully observed by those seemingly most able to abandon such forms: economically independent, educated, and professional women.⁵ The image of the southern lady, the southern exemplar of the "charmingly feminine," argues Scott, "lived on [into the 1920s and 30s], not as a complete prescription for woman's life but as a style which as often as not was a façade to ward off criticism of unladylike independence or to please

⁴Last two citations from entry for "vagary," Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd ed., vol 19 (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1989) 394.

⁵See Anne Firor Scott, The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930 (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1970) 225.

men" or "to secur[e] a hearing" with important people (226, 225, 210). Southern women agitating for political and economic changes in their condition "found it effective to operate within the ladylike tradition," masking themselves with the trappings of conventional femininity to achieve their agenda (210).

Scott's language points to their enactment of ladyhood as a façade or a style--a veneer over their "authentic" identities as women who want something for themselves. Of course, they would receive dispensations only as long as their performances were not discovered to be false. But if Scott knows that their performances were consciously adopted masquerades and not "genuine," how did the women's contemporaries fail to also discover this? Perhaps they did. Perhaps such exposure of the "masquerade" of female identity confounded the very notion of gendered identity. If Newman's letter can shed light on ladylike machinations, Rivière's piece can elaborate the meanings of the oscillation between the forcefulness of Newman's "professional author" voice and the slightness of her "lady author" voice in terms of gender and power--and perhaps point the way to viewing masquerade not just as the effort to cover up, but as the effort to expose and change.

To support Rivière's claims, "Womanliness as a Masquerade" uses the case study of one of Rivière's analysands, an intellectual woman like Newman, "engaged in work . . . which consisted principally in speaking and writing."⁶ This woman--whose anxieties about professionalism arise out of, Rivière suggests, the woman's birth and rearing as a southerner--prompts Rivière to speculate that successful women often feel compelled to adopt a stance of femininity to cloak their abilities in a world that would be hostile to them:⁷

⁶Joan Rivière, "Womanliness as a Masquerade," The International Journal of Psychoanalysis, vol. 10 (1929). Rpt. in Formations of Fantasy, eds. Victor Burgin, James Donald, and Cora Kaplan (London: Methuen, 1986) 36.

⁷Rivière writes:

The exhibition in public of [the analysand's] intellectual proficiency, which was in itself carried through successfully, signified an exhibition of herself in possession of the father's penis, having castrated him. The display once over, she was seized by horrible dread of the retribution the father would then exact. Obviously it was a step towards propitiating the avenger to endeavour to offer herself to him sexually. This phantasy, it then appeared, had been very common in her childhood and youth, which had been spent in the Southern States of America. (37)

The woman's "coquetti[sh]" response to paternal figures--her effort to escape their punishment for her intellectual success by acting flirtatious--relates, Rivière asserts, to the woman's fantasies of "defend[ing] herself" from a black man who "came to attack her" by seducing him so that she could turn him in to the authorities (37). The conditions of southern society--especially its rigidly sustained gender and racial divisions encoded by bodies--perhaps sharpened the forces that compel privileged women to masquerade, to

Womanliness . . . could be assumed and worn as a mask, both to hide the possession of masculinity and to avert the reprisals expected if she was found to possess it. . . .The reader may ask how I define womanliness or where I draw the line between genuine womanliness and the 'masquerade'. My suggestion is not, however, that there is any such difference; whether radical or superficial, they are the same thing. ("Womanliness as a Masquerade" 38)

Her conclusions are remarkably similar to Scott's about southern women of the period, yet Rivière extends her "suggestion": presumably, all women "possess" "masculinity" and must cover it over with "genuine womanliness."

For Rivière and her contemporaries, having professional power is a manifestation of masculinity, for masculinity means ability and authority: Newman notes, "no woman ever believes that a man can't do something, because, as you must know, nothing stops them from doing what they want to do."⁸ Although Newman's biography suggests that little could stop the author herself from doing what she wanted to do, her comment about the relative freedom of men to do as they wish indicates the level of restraint of action that she felt as a woman and reveals that she connected empowerment with a

alternate between a position of strength and a strategic performance of exaggerated femininity. The privileged southern woman provides, then, a definitive case of the ways women "are" generally, in Rivière's estimation.

⁸Frances Newman, letter to Tom Y. Horan, 9 May 1927, Frances Newman's Letters 254.

male position. "Masculinity" in both Newman's and Rivière's terms thus corresponds to Lacanian theorizations of the phallus as "the signifier of power . . . the scepter" that can be "possessed" by either men or women but generally is inherited by men in androcentric cultures.⁹ But the woman, Lacan insists (and Rivière's theorization of masquerade implies), "has various ways of taking it on, this phallus, and of keeping it for herself."¹⁰ Rivière's articulation of women's relation to power differs from Lacan's, however: masquerade is not the seizing of phallic power to mask woman's lack (a castration already effected), but is instead the concealment of her already having power in an environment granting power conventionally only to men.¹¹ The masquerade described in "Womanliness as a Masquerade" is the woman's "'disguising herself' as merely a castrated

⁹About the phallus as "scepter," from Jacques Lacan's unpublished "Les formations de l'inconscient," see Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen, Lacan: The Absolute Master, trans. Douglas Brick (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1991) 213.

¹⁰Jacques Lacan, "God and the Jouissance of ~~The~~ Woman," Chapter 6 of Seminar XX, Encore. Rpt. In Feminine Sexuality, eds. Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose, trans. Jacqueline Rose (New York: Norton, 1982) 145.

¹¹Note that "masquerade," a term Lacan borrows directly from Rivière, means for Lacan the adoption of the phallic function to veil the fact of castration--something that both men and women do. For a summary of Lacan's use of "masquerade," see Jonathan Scott Lee's Jacques Lacan (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1990) 180.

woman"--disguising herself, that is, as woman (38). She enacts a womanliness that is "the male fiction, construction, condition" of "the woman"¹²--castrated and naturally without power. Fearful of being cut off from power if she reveals that she has it, Rivière's conceptualized woman must pretend power's absence, playing into cultural but male-centered assumptions about what a woman is. This masquerade, Rivière asserts, is "femininity" itself, "they are the same thing."

Rivière thus recognizes female identity as constructed and assumed rather than natural or inherent; "genuine womanliness" is disingenuous, a social fabrication enacted by women (38). But Rivière's hypothesized motive for and effect of masquerade--to mitigate punishment--depends upon the performativity and constructedness of femininity remaining hidden, for if it is exposed, the woman's game will be up. How are those who witness the woman's display of power to reconcile it with her display of femininity? Does Newman's closing "lady voice" in her letter to Gross function only to cover over her authority in order to protect herself from the male literary establishment's retribution? I would like to speculate, as Rivière did not,

¹²Stephen Heath, "Joan Rivière and the Masquerade," Formations of Fantasy 49.

about what could happen if masquerade were revealed. Perhaps in exposing the performativity of femininity, any woman could trouble founding assumptions of all identity, particularly those assumptions which legitimate and perpetuate male privilege as natural. For if she must "act" a lack that she is not, perhaps what he seemingly "is" is lacking; the revelation of her enactment would surely call essentialist ideas about gender (and the genders' "natural" relation to power) into question. Femininity would be then not something she needs, but something she plays with; her game, however, could seriously undermine assumptions about men and women.

Exposed as construction, "woman" cannot have natural traits or an essential nature. Stephen Heath's "Joan Rivière and the Masquerade" touches on the effects of such understanding:

The masquerade is a representation of femininity but then femininity is representation, the representation of the woman. . . . Representation gives not essential but constructed identity, which is uncertain and, as the perspectives slide, precisely masquerade, mask, disguise, threat, danger. (53)

When its performativity becomes obvious, femininity becomes, Heath points out, threatening or dangerous (from a patriarchal perspective) because defamiliarized and hence disturbing to normative gender relations. This kind of

exposure is what Judith Butler identifies as marking potential moments of social disruption that can prompt change: "The parodic repetition of 'the original,'" Butler proposes, "reveals the original to be nothing other than a parody of the idea of the natural and the original" and therefore contests such identity.¹³ Further, if femininity is a construct--women's posturing as "woman" in male terms--then that construction, the very structure of womanliness, could be radically revised or imagined.

Masquerade thus may not function simply as a defense against patriarchal rule's retribution against women's authority, but as an offense to it. At its base, the idea of masquerade (if not the practice, which risks obscuring or, in Rivière's theorization, tries to obscure its performativity) suggests women's power, especially their agency. Perhaps exposing that ladylike performance is a masquerade actually can produce social gains greater than the effort to hide the performed nature of an identity.

¹³Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (New York: Routledge, 1990) 31. Butler thinks that "signification is not a founding act, but rather a regulated process of repetition" and that "'agency' . . . is to be located within the possibility of a variation on that repetition. If the rules governing signification not only restrict, but enable . . . new possibilities for gender that contest the rigid codes of hierarchical binarisms, then it is only within the practices of repetitive signifying that a subversion of identity becomes possible" (145).

Luce Irigaray's work, for example, outlines how masquerade sometimes operates as enabling "mimesis" to unsettle the social order:

One must assume the feminine role deliberately. Which means already to convert a form of subordination into an affirmation, and thus to begin to thwart it. Whereas a direct feminine challenge to this condition means demanding to speak as a (masculine) "subject," that is, it means to postulate a relation to the intelligible that would maintain sexual indifference.

To play with mimesis is thus, for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it. It means to resubmit herself . . . to "ideas," in particular to ideas about herself, that are elaborated in/by a masculine logic, but so as to make "visible," by an effect of playful repetition, what was supposed to remain invisible.

. . . ¹⁴

According to Irigaray, affirmation of the feminine through its deliberate enactment begins to dislodge femininity as a subordinate identity. The exposure of the masquerade as a

¹⁴This Sex Which Is Not One, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985) 76. I will not maintain distinctions between Irigaray's formulation of "mimesis" and "masquerade," terms that have generated confusion and debate. Believing that masquerade even as Rivière describes it implies mimesis's disruptive qualities, I prefer to use the term "masquerade" to denote specifically the unexpected exposure of performativity. "Invisible" masquerade would not be masquerade in the terms that I will employ henceforth in this chapter, for it could not be "seen" as masquerade. In this sense, my working definition of masquerade corresponds to Mary Ann Doane's idea of "double mimesis" as put forth in The Desire to Desire (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987) and to Pamela Robertson's concept of "parodic mimicry" formulated in Guilty Pleasures: Feminist Camp from Mae West to Madonna (Durham: Duke UP, 1996).

masquerade interrogates assumptions about masculinity as well as femininity, destabilizing hegemonic cultural stories that depend upon fixed notions of gender.

To distinguish between the two types of masquerade, the kind that Anne Firor Scott and Rivière identify, which goes undiscovered, and the kind that Irigaray and Butler suggest can lead to change, we might return to Newman's letter to Gross and her gender politics. In the short term, Newman may be trying only to ensure that Gross publishes her work the way that she wants--and her "masquerade" should remain hidden. But I think that especially given the context of Newman's works' insistence upon radically revising notions of the southern lady--the social change which she wants to effect--her letter functions parodically. Sentence after sentence reiterates the authorial "I," conveying its activity and presence: this "I" "sends," "notifies," "thinks," "confirms," "asks," and--this is stressed four times--"does not want" to be messed with. Newman's commanding tone and articulation of her strict adherence to conventional authoritative guidelines (using, for example, "the Concise Oxford Dictionary," checking "usages, even in the matter of hyphens") mark her as authority, a position which, we have seen, is coded as masculine in Newman's world. The letter thus initially establishes her ability

"to speak as a (masculine) 'subject'"---a position that Irigaray suggests "maintain[s] sexual indifference" by being complicitous with an ideology that covers over authority's connection to (only) masculinity.

The self-referential pointing out of sexual difference that concludes her letter, then, the taking on of that exaggerated "feminine" voice of devaluation (of the "lady's" voice which can only "hope" and "expect" things of men) immediately following her "masculine" articulation, can be read as amplifying and then deconstructing stereotypical estimations of gender through a "playful repetition" of sexist ideas. Newman's "silly-me!" posturing articulates what publishers "know" about women writers: Newman is certain that Gross "already know[s] all about" female whimsies (just as Tom Horan "must know" that "nothing stops [men] from doing what they want"). As an author, she refuses to "remain invisible" as a woman, and by doing so, destabilizes the investment of power and authority in strictly male terms. Affirming her identity as both author(ity) and woman, two incongruous terms in her world, Newman thus becomes something more than what either term alone suggests or allows, and her masquerade as "lady author" points to the absurdity of such naturalized

divisions. It is a strategy that would carry through her life and work.¹⁵

That her deployment of an authorial and female identity threatened the social order (and not just literary standards) may be judged by the responses Newman's work prompted. Confronted with Newman, the Saturday Review of Literature, for example, perhaps only half-jokingly asserted that "the South must begin to realize that its only salvation lies in taking the girl babies of good family who look as if they might have brains, and drowning them as soon as possible after birth."¹⁶ She wrote the kind of fiction that she admired in her literary criticism: work that "ma[d]e it difficult for men to cling to their dearest illusions about themselves, their past dignity, and their future bliss."¹⁷ A sympathetic reviewer spoke similarly of

¹⁵Anne Goodwyn Jones's introduction to Newman's Dead Lovers Are Faithful Lovers (1928; Athens: U of Georgia P, 1994) suggests that Newman's style deploys masquerade strategy even at the sentence-level, miming in what Diana Fuss calls the "Irigarian sense of to undo by overdoing," Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature & Difference, (New York: Routledge, 1989) 32. Through its rigid compliance with syntactical forms and recurrent repetition of clauses, Newman's writing parodies traditional discourse, stressing the alienating quality that "proper" discourse can have. See Jones's xxvii-xxviii.

¹⁶Elmer Davis, "Candid Miss Newman," Saturday Review of Literature, III, 18 December 1926: 449.

¹⁷Frances Newman, The Short Story's Mutations: From Petronius to Paul Morand (New York: B.W. Huebsch, 1924) 3.

Newman's own fiction, reporting that "Most men will be unable to read [Newman's second novel]. It says a good many of the things men have tried by every social and economic device to avoid hearing."¹⁸ The parodic timbre of Newman's voice resonates most clearly in her assessment of her native region, and not surprisingly, it is her perceived attacks on southern tradition that most outrage or delight her peers. Katharine Faraday's discovery in Newman's The Hard-Boiled Virgin that "a southern lady's charms are estimated entirely by their agreement with tradition and that her intelligence is judged entirely by her ability to disagree with tradition" leads her to confess to an eminent male writer "that she thought there was a great deal to be said for the Old South, but not nearly as much as people had already said."¹⁹ This is the writing that so irked the likes of

¹⁸Isabel Paterson, "Phantom Lover," rev. of Dead Lovers Are Faithful Lovers, by Frances Newman, New York Herald Tribune Books 6 May 1928: 3.

Ironically, Newman writes of this same novel that she does not "think any women will [like it better than The Hard-Boiled Virgin, her first novel], but all the men who have read it so far like it better. I suppose they enjoy seeing two women so idiotically in love with a man, and altogether, men don't come off so badly in it, and women do." Letter to Edith Stern, 2 February 1928, Frances Newman's Letters 309.

¹⁹Frances Newman, The Hard-Boiled Virgin (1926; Athens: U of Georgia P, 1980) 244. Subsequent parenthetical references to The Hard-Boiled Virgin will be to this edition.

Donald Davidson: in his estimation, Newman was among a few southerners offering "harsh or agitated studies of southern life," "foolishness" understandable from northerners but "hardly so excusable, and . . . not in the least helpful" from southern writers.²⁰ He suggests that Newman's attitudes

are imported, not native attitudes. . . . In the novels of Frances Newman, . . . the deliberate puncturing of pretensions thought to be southern smacks of a paying-off of old scores: the southern woman, now intellectually as emancipated as her northern sister, takes a dig at the tradition that would have kept her in "woman's place." . . . [T]he southern tradition has evidently become inaccessible to [Newman and writers like her]. It is not an intimate and an immediate part of their understanding.²¹

The parodic rupture is Newman's "deliberate puncturing" of the Old South tradition with a perspective that Davidson is eager to discount, a feminine perspective clearly steeped in that tradition. Apparently, Newman's thrust is effective, for Davidson takes pains to label her and her writing as anything but southern: she is a "southern woman" who has no access to or understanding of (despite--or perhaps because of--her intellectual emancipation) what it means to be southern, he insists, and thus is a woman who can only falsify the South and its ladies. Here Davidson

²⁰Donald Davidson, "The Trend of Literature: A Partisan View," Culture in the South, ed. W.T. Couch (Chapel Hill: U of NC Press, 1934) 193, 184.

²¹Davidson, "The Trend of Literature" 201-202.

exposes that southernness (like Rivière's conception of womanliness) is a performed and not inherent identity; for if Newman's birth, family, and life in Atlanta as well as her consciousness of herself as a Southerner do not qualify her as southern, what would? She is not worth reading, he insists, for she is not really what she professes to be, not really a southern lady--and therefore cannot tell the truth, at least in his terms.

Davidson's commentary also reflects a desire to lessen the worth of her articulation of her "female" experience, perhaps to secure his masculine as well as his southern identity. He attempts to diminish the relevance of her writing, labeling her work as the "ugly whisperings of a repressed and naughty child" and tagging her fiction "mere autobiographical documents, slightly disguised but barely concealing the vitriolic social criticism which animates them."²² At the same time that Davidson points to her "vitriolic social criticism," he dismisses how troubling her voice is to the social order, her "ugly whisperings" being merely "childish" and "naughty." He refuses to grant that Newman's fictions constitute literature, even bad literature, pointing to them as "mere autobiographical

²²Davidson, "Review," Critic's Almanac 13 May 1928. Rpt. in The Spyglass: Views and Reviews, 1924-1930, ed. John Tyree Fain (Nashville: Vanderbilt UP, 1963) 27-28.

documents" and "social criticism." His comments reflect contemporary disdain for work informed by personal experience--if such experience is either particular to the "feminine" or considered disruptive to social stability.²³ By such standards Newman's work is not really art, but politics based in the local and subjective. For her part, Newman admitted her politics: "I have never been able to see why the universal is so far superior to the particular."²⁴ Indeed, Newman confesses that she has "been taken with a desire to write about the superiority of the particular to the universal."²⁵ Little wonder that Davidson

²³Compare Davidson's dismissal with T.S. Matthews's assertion that Dead Lovers Are Faithful Lovers "is the kind of book that must have been taken excessively seriously by its author. It is an unsmiling study of love" and "an old [story]." See "Fancy Goods," The New Republic 27 June 1928: 153. Matthews desires to diminish the seriousness with which Newman's focus and prose forces readers to approach Newman's topic, the condition of women in "love." Further, the topic--a "study of love"--becomes the focus of Matthews's complaint that Newman is "excessively serious"--as though her topic and perspective do not merit sustained attention, particularly because everyone knows just what the story is/should be, for it is "an old one" (153). That he misses the satiric humor of her story (the "study" is hardly "unsmiling" though it may be unflinching) suggests an effort to dismiss the troubling qualities of the love-and-marriage story she has to tell.

²⁴Newman, "On the State of Literature in the Late Confederacy," The New York Tribune 16 August 1925. Rpt. in Emory Reginald Abbott's "Purple Prejudices: The Critical Writings of Frances Newman" (Vanderbilt U, 1992) 342.

²⁵Frances Newman, letter to Alfred Stanford, 25 March 1925, Frances Newman's Letters 169.

perhaps hopefully suggests that Newman's voice is just a whisper, as though the particular story she wants to tell can barely be heard or hardly be spoken. Her masquerade as a woman and as a southerner leaves him troubled.

Despite critiques trivializing the female slant of her work, Newman remained throughout her short career sensitive to the need for expressions of women's "particular" concerns. She observes that "having been born in the southern United States, and having been born a woman, I would not try to write about anything except a southern woman."²⁶ And, one might presume, from the stance of a southern woman, since Newman endorses the idea that one can "write like a woman."²⁷ She in fact locates her voice's disruptive quality precisely in terms of its articulation of gender difference, consistently asserting that she "express[es] things only as a woman--as distinct from a man--could express."²⁸ Newman praised Virginia Woolf as "one

²⁶Newman, "Frances Newman Tells How She Writes," Atlanta Journal Magazine 1 April 1928. Rpt. in Abbott, "Purple Prejudices" 461-62.

²⁷She points to her own writing as well as Rose Macaulay's to bear the assertion. See her review "Rose Macaulay," "Literary Introductions--III," Atlanta Constitution 14 November 1920. Rpt. In Abbott, "Purple Prejudices" 101.

²⁸Elizabeth Hardwick, introduction, Dead Lovers are Faithful Lovers, by Frances Newman (1928; New York: Arno, 1977) 2.

of the increasing number of women who realize that a woman must write the things a woman feels, and that she must avoid the things a man feels as carefully as a man who has never been east of Georgia must avoid describing the jungles of Africa."²⁹ All this is not to suggest that Newman is an essentialist; rather, as her two published novels illustrate, she sees a strategic value in adopting and privileging a disruptive "feminine" voice while simultaneously exposing identity as primarily a cultural production or effect. She wants to undermine the power differential between genders. Her voice is thus tagged initially as feminine but then also as not the feminine that her world expects to hear--and in such a move, her voice commands attention and prompts confusions. This is Newman's identity politics: gender is a story to be told and revised. She very consciously saw herself as wielding a voice that could shift the traditional terms of female representation, telling a woman's story substantively different--and, in a period of realism, differently--from a man's story.³⁰

²⁹"To the Lighthouse," review, Atlanta Journal Magazine 3 July 1927. Rpt. In Abbott, "Purple Prejudices" 411.

³⁰Newman acknowledges the primary importance of gender in subject formation even while she insists upon a cultural-production model of gender, noting the difficulty of overcoming "the ideas [southern girls are] presumably born

So especially within art and literature, cultural productions which describe the stories that women actually live, Newman advocated a changed perspective. Asserting that "nature imitates art," Newman pointed to how women make themselves correspond with artistic ideals.³¹ "When the Pre-Raphaelites gave the world their tall goddesses," Newman declares, "all English ladies became extremely Pre-Raphaelite at once, but one may suppose . . . that nature was not altogether responsible for the change in ladies' beauty" (64). The breadth of possible identities, then, is limited by the cultural production of possible articulations of gender. That is, "art"--both in the sense of women's own artful "making up" of themselves and in the sense of the texts, largely male-authored, that help define standards--determines, at least in part, the nature of womanly beauty and the shape of female bodies. Women then have some degree of agency in self-production; art, some degree of responsibility for depicting the "selves" that are reproduced.

with, and the ideas [they are] undoubtedly taught."
 "Frances Newman Tells How She Writes," Atlanta Journal Magazine 1 April 1928. Rpt. In Abbott, "Purple Prejudices" 461.

³¹Newman, "The Rising Age of Heroines," Atlanta Constitution 4 April 1920. Rpt. In Abbott, "Purple Prejudices" 64.

Thus, Newman objects to stories' limiting models for women, especially when, as in Jane Austen's case, the author's own life suggested possibilities that her stories failed to reflect:

In the days when it was still necessary for any woman to close with the first God-fearing man who asked her, no girl was material for a heroine who could not at eighteen outwit her desperate sister of twenty, carry off the catch of the season, and triumphantly proclaim her estate of great lady by going into dinner at the head of the line in black velvet from Worth. However successfully Jane Austen may have lived her life as a spinster, she married her Elizabeth and her Catherine quite as prosperously and almost as young as The Duchess did her Phyllis and her Dolores. . . . These lady novelists probably had no idea that they were supporting the more than usually pessimistic views about women.³²

The stories were all the more depressing to Newman because they dealt solely with the "marrying off" of young women whose lives presumably concluded at the point of their union: "In that day no successfully married woman was supposed to have any history except that recorded in the parish register, so it was not necessary to follow the heroine across the church threshold unless some dark misfortune were in store for her" (65). The adult woman, "successfully married," has no (speakable) story unless motivated by "dark misfortune." The girl has an identity and a story--the maiden's quest for marriage and

³²Newman, "The Rising Age of Heroines," 64-5.

motherhood--but her story is framed unquestioningly and entirely in terms of her relation to men, her marital/(hetero)sexual/filial status. All such stories--even the spinster's untold tale--depend upon male referents and, in that way, prescribe or endorse male-focused or male-centric enactments of female identity. These stories perpetuate, by promoting the naturalness of female selflessness in marriage and motherhood, the cultural conditions suppressing women's access to "self" or desire. Stressing "In the days when" and "In that day" inscribes, somewhat optimistically perhaps, such stories' passing: Newman envisions for her readers a new day and the possibility of a new story that "follow[s] women's attitude toward themselves," but she believes it is a story that had remained mostly unwritten (64).³³

³³Even a decade after Newman's comments mark the passing of such stories, the dominant fictions proposing that marriage and motherhood are the supreme achievements of an adult woman persisted. That is, marriage as the proper story for a woman was perpetuated not only in fiction, but by diverse cultural productions arising out of the sciences, advertising, law, and popular media. Even very liberal viewpoints stressed the benefits of marriage and parenthood over other pursuits, particularly for women. See psychiatrist Beatrice Hinkle's The Re-Creating of the Individual: A Study of Psychological Types and Their Relation to Psychoanalysis (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1923), Floyd Dell's Love in the Machine Age: A Psychological Study of the Transition from Patriarchal Society (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1930), and Helen Everett's "Fifty Marriages," a review of What is Wrong with Marriage?, by G. V. Hamilton and Kenneth MacGowan, The New

Indeed, just four years later, Newman felt forced to condemn "marriage [as] an institution created for human beings in a primitive state of society and of intelligence" and to admit that she "ha[d]n't any substitute for it," before she reconsidered: "Perhaps I have, in a way--that will all be in the Virgin [her first novel], though."³⁴ Newman grasps that even one text can prompt social change, and she attests to her determination for her fiction to write a different story, a "woman's story" that revises previous stories. Her two published novels, The Hard-Boiled Virgin (1926) and Dead Lovers Are Faithful Lovers (1928) work together to tell this new story, their three female characters promoting alternative visions of women's lives.

The Hard-Boiled Virgin is foremost a story about stories, especially the stories that shape Katharine Faraday's body. Newman erases distinctions between literary productions and real living for women, positing that "since Katharine Faraday never quite learned the difference between life and books, of course she had to read."³⁵ A deluge of

Republic 22 May 1929: 45-7. Each of these very different discourses insist upon the marital and maternal situation as the best and healthiest for all women.

³⁴Frances Newman, letter to A. B. Bernd, 24 October 1924, Frances Newman's Letters 138.

³⁵Frances Newman, letter to John W. Crawford, 27 November 1926, Frances Newman's Letters 226.

literary allusions in Newman's novel reflects the profound importance of varied texts in the education of Katharine Faraday--texts as diverse as Elsie Dinsmore and Dr. Faustus, Beauty's Daughters and Gray's Anatomy, her father's literary journals and her sister's ladies' magazines. Katharine forms her understanding of and expectations about the world from these texts; what Katharine "knows" is culled from her reading. At the foundation of all the stories is the female body, inscribed within the system of romance, marriage, and reproduction. Even The Origin of Species seems to Katharine to illuminate her own situation as unmarried, being about "so much mating and so much reproduction" that she feels excluded (84). Reading, particularly the reading of texts endorsing romantic union, is so constitutive of Katharine Faraday that she views herself as a kind of text; she perceives her body as a book that will have a "small circulation" and her life as a series of dramatic episodes in which she is the romantic heroine and a series of men play different variations on the same part.

But The Hard-Boiled Virgin refuses to tell the expected story for the Southern debutante: marriage and motherhood--or, the unhappy ending, if she fails after spending "uncomfortable years . . . professionally engaged in looking about for a husband," spinsterhood and death

(128). Instead, the novel redefines terms, closing with Katharine Faraday, now in her thirties, a successful playwright and a self-proclaimed "hard-boiled virgin," not physically a virgin at all, who is scripting her next seduction. Newman wrote that "the idea which pleased me more than any other idea in The Hard-Boiled Virgin" was "the idea that all of Katharine Faraday's masculine admirers were only actors playing in different acts of the same drama she was writing for herself by living her own life."³⁶ Moving from being a text scripted by male-authored convention to authoring herself, Katharine enables the novel to expose the discursive formation of identity while never suggesting escape from it--only the potential of reauthoring that identity, by "writing for herself."

The very fact that Katharine sees herself as the heroine of a story allows her to imagine self-revision and to experiment with the possibilities of alternative representations of female identity. Collapsing literary terms with cosmetic application, for example, she artfully makes up her face before a dance. Gazing in the mirror, she

began the cosmetic anthology she had collected while she was discovering that ambassadresses and princesses and countesses and mere baronesses are painted to look painted instead of being painted

³⁶Frances Newman, "Frances Newman Tells How She Writes." Rpt. In Abbott, "Purple Prejudices" 465.

to look pretty, and which she had translated and abridged for the purpose of rivalling the prettiest [of her peers]. (100)

Although her efforts are, at this early point in the novel, still committed to outmatching her female friends in gaining male attention, Katharine Faraday here begins to realize the power of the female image as text. The European women she cites, with access at least in title to power as a birthright and not only through marriage, become an alternative enactment of femininity for Katharine, an enactment which insists upon its own artificiality and hence disrupts the seeming naturalness of the belles' "looking pretty." To be "painted to look painted" suggests an unveiling of a constructed identity that Butler finds so promising because it opens up the possibility of agency; Katharine illustrates such agency, functioning as an editor anthologizing, translating, and abridging images, to make up her own image in a way that southern girls were forbidden. Her feminine ideal is not the image that men have admired, but her discovered image of powerful women very unlike most of the southern women she knows. Katharine Faraday finds that she need not enact the same femininity as her peers; the images of foreign nobility that she tries to transcribe with her application of cosmetics to her own body are images

of difference and power. Self-empowerment results from this masquerade.

Katharine initially has made her body conform to the dominant cultural representations of women, especially those stories that insist upon the purity of the girl. A voracious reader,

she read a great many pages of advice to girls, and she saw only what she had already heard and what she had no reason not to believe--that no girl can allow any man to touch so much as her pocket handkerchief until he has humbly begged her to become his wife, and that she cannot allow him to touch anything very much more intimate than her pocket handkerchief until she has become his wife.
(27)

The romances that her elders deem appropriate reading matter for a southern belle, those sanctioning virginity and chastity in preparation for marriage, do not ready her for the experience of her own or others' desire, however.

Certain that "no southern lady ever allows any man to touch so much as her pocket handkerchief until he has begged her to become his wife, and . . . that no gentleman ever thinks of kissing any one except a disreputable girl until he has asked her to marry him," Katharine "did not think of what she might feel if [a man]'s lips touched her lips, or of what she might feel if his cheek touched her cheek" (116).

She is thus shocked by the reality of Edward Cabot's kiss even though she had "read several hundred novels"

detailing romantic unions. She reads his kiss conventionally, as an insult to her honor, wondering what she had done to provoke such an affront (for her reading leads her to believe that she is morally suspect if she fails to elicit "legitimate" ardent attachment). She never speaks to Edward again, though she later recognizes that she "acts an outraged virtue she could not feel" (186). Yet such incidents prompt Katharine to begin to question textual authority when it fails to speak to her desire or being. In fact, it is the gap between her feelings and the textual accounts of what her experience "should" be that eventually propels Katharine Faraday's shift from a career as a reader, subject to others' texts, to her profession as an author of a story true to her desires, a playwright and a self-inventor in a world which scripts identity.

The odds are against such a movement. Katharine early understands that her gendered body limits the possible stories she can take part in as well as determines what her participation in those stories will be:

Even before Katharine Faraday observed that the stupidest girl with a short upper lip and curly golden hair is born to a social situation much pleasanter than the social situation of the cleverest girl with a long upper lip and straight black hair, she knew that any boy is born to a more honourable social situation than any girl. And after she had observed that the boy's honourable situation seemed to be the result of his inability to produce a baby rather than to his

ability to produce an idea, she still went on saying that she was sorry she had not been able to make her thin lips touch one of her sharp elbows before she lost confidence in a kissed elbow's efficacy in changing a girl into a boy. (30)

This passage articulates a semiotics of bodies, marking the distribution of power along gender divisions. Woman's productivity is framed solely in terms of her body's reproductivity--and is not valued. In fact, it is the boy's "inability to produce a baby" rather than any mental productivity that betters his "social situation."³⁷ Women's connection to producing bodies is therefore the sole determinant of the status of men and women, a lesson that Katharine Faraday learns as a child, even before she learns that pretty-but-stupid little girls are in a more desirable position than smart-but-ugly little girls. Of course, the irony of the latter lesson in the context of the former is that pretty little girls are in a more desirable situation because they will be chosen as mates, will produce babies--a status that only reinscribes the subordinate social value of women.

Katharine Faraday wants to be a boy because she longs for boys' "honourable situation," for the "practical

³⁷Three years after The Hard-Boiled Virgin's publication, Virginia Woolf would complain about "men who have no apparent qualification save that they are not women," in A Room of One's Own (1929; San Diego: HBJ, 1981) 27.

privilege[s]" contingent upon their inabilities, such as the advantage of "sitting in the first seat of the first row of desks, even when [girls'] names were written [on "The Roll of Honour" which ranked the superior students] high above the name of any little boy" (43). Failing to turn into a boy, young Katharine enacts what seems to be the only culturally legitimate access she can have to such privilege: Katharine is "taken with a romantic attachment" for "the boy who sat across the aisle from her, in the seat he did not owe entirely to his scholarship" and in the seat that, if assigned by merit, would have been Katharine's, precisely because

he was one of those favoured beings who are not created to produce babies and who, consequently, can sit in the first row of desks without being as clever as [Katharine Faraday] thought that she was, and who can become president of the United States without being as clever as she intended to become. (44-45)

Newman thus illustrates the cultural imperative prompting Katharine's initial adherence to the idea that she will gain access to privilege only through men, specifically through "romantic" association with men. Simultaneously, she reveals how that access perpetuates the subordinate position of women despite their belief in their own abilities. Newman's narrator targets the seeming "naturalness" of the discrimination for critique especially when representing

Katharine's response to it, for Katharine Faraday does not question the given order of things. The gap between Katharine's consciousness and the passage's implications invites a readerly deconstruction of the power associated with gender difference.

If all of Katharine Faraday's early training prepares her for her relations to men, particularly for her role as wife and mother, her body marks her "success" or "failure." Her first period leaves her both satisfied that she "had become a woman" (54) and with a "conviction that she would not disappoint the hope of her husband, or the hope of her husband's father and mother, when she married into a family so ancient that its dignity demanded an immediate heir" (56). To have a body "marked" for or by men by being selected as a mate proves her "worth." Thus, Katharine's seemingly masochistic response to a bruise inflicted by a dance partner: after she attends her first formal dance at West Point, she discovers a "tender blue spot which she was sure one of the round brass buttons on James Fuller's dress uniform had left on her freesia chest" (106). She presses the bruise night after night, "trying to keep [it] blue and tender until she danced her second evening at West Point" (111). The "tender blue spot" feels "pleasantly painful" to Katharine (115); the pleasure she derives from the bruise is

that it is a trace of Fuller's desire for her, and hence a marker of her worth. In fact, when he sends her a dance card that is "adorned . . . with a round brass button which might easily be the same button that had pressed against her yellow frock in April," she exults that it "would . . . make an easily displayed trophy as a hatpin" (117).

Katharine Faraday learns that control, especially sexual control, over women's bodies often falls to men. Even the law reflects "sound masculine views," and since "raising the age of consent meant increasing the possibility that perfectly respectable young Georgians--who might even be sons and grandsons of the heroes who wore the grey--would be hanged for nothing more than the violation of fourteen year old virgins," the legislature upholds men's right to rape or seduce adolescent girls (174). So complete is male control over the female body and identity that "in Georgia no lady was supposed to know that she was a virgin until she had ceased to be one" (174-75). Katharine herself identifies sexual involvement as the catalyst for her most devastating feelings of loss of control over her own body: when she has sex for the first time, she worries that she might have been impregnated and "suffer[s] because she did not know what was happening in her own body, and because she could not control her own body" (275). She blames her

lover, Alden Ames, for having "br[ought] her to [such] a situation" and hates him for the control he has exerted over her (275). Yet Katharine also recognizes that marriage offers even less control over self and sexuality for women. Katharine considers most wives that she knows to be little more than prostitutes, marrying for economic security. She considers telling her intended fiancé that "if she should ever be reduced to making her own living, she would rather make it by day than by night" (194). If men can dominate women's bodies, they can also, at will, provide women freedom: Katharine is not driven to the extremes of either marriage or a menial job because her brother leaves his estate to her, "convinced . . . that his youngest sister would never have the kind of charms which were likely to get her a satisfactory husband, or which were likely to get her any husband at all" (165). Fraternal money allows her to refuse a marriage proposal from a perfectly suitable man; the ideal male-female relationship, Newman's novel teases, may be this brotherly one (in which, of course, the brother is dead).

In fact, insofar as it permits her to reject marriage, her brother's money enables Katharine Faraday's move from being caught within the debutante's story to generating an alternative story that produces a female body outside of the

regulating fictions of her day. She will tell men that "her small celebrity"--a celebrity that depends upon her ability to produce ideas (not babies)--"take[s] the place of her body" in her relations with them (284). She thus denies men their status by insisting that they grant her a "social situation" of "celebrity" in place of taking her body for their pleasure and procreation. Until Katharine becomes a writer, the only represented way that a woman had access to celebrity was, as Katharine sensed as a child, through connection to a man's prominence; "the possibility of becoming important herself" is something she has not read about in the stories that constitute her experience. She must generate the idea herself: Katharine conceives in the last fifty pages of the book that she could become "important herself instead of waiting to find honourable favour in the sight of a man so celebrated that he could make her important merely by allowing her to use his names with a suitably apologetic prefix [Mrs.]" (230).

Far from being a story in which the female body and its desires are sadly suppressed, as many critics argue,³⁸

³⁸Kathryn Lee Seidel's assessment is typical: "Katharine Faraday in Frances Newman's The Hard-Boiled Virgin, far from being self-reliant, becomes self-deluded, artificial, a victim of a rigid code that robs her of the potential implied in the title's egg image; hers becomes a petrified, toughened personality." The Southern Belle in the American Novel (Tampa: U of South Florida P, 1985) 172.

Newman's text creates a character whose newly written body escapes the stories that would contain it and imagines female-centered subjectivity and desire. Katharine's rejection of marriage establishes her in the novel's and her own terms, not as a spinster, not bitter or frigid, but as a virgin. But Newman insists upon divesting such a term of its male control, retrieving the original meaning of "remaining a virgin"--which, as Havelock Ellis reminded her generation, was not to "take a vow of chastity, but to refuse to submit to the yoke of patriarchal marriage."³⁹ In proclaiming herself a perpetual virgin, Katharine regains control over her own body, denying men's "rights" as lovers and husbands (as well as fathers, brothers, and sons). She refuses to allow her body to remain placed even within discourse in any of the conventional roles that her world offers.

The first "episode" of the novel, in fact, prepares the reader for such redefinitions. The Hard-Boiled Virgin begins with Katharine Faraday's childhood witnessing of the suppressed sexuality of her parents, both "neatly buttoned into white cambric" in an Atlanta where "[t]he prestige of double beds and double standards was not seriously

³⁹Havelock Ellis, Studies in the Psychology of Sex, vol. 4 (New York: Random, 1928) 165.

diminished" (9). Her "mother had no reason for suspecting that the Atlantic Ocean and the German language were concealing the opinions of Sigmund Freud from Georgia, or for suspecting that some women can be mothers only by day and wives only by night," so she does not hesitate to move the sick eight-year old Katharine into the parents' bedroom (9-10). Katharine thus witnesses "her mother's reproaches" of her father's sexual advances, "her father's stumbling steps and his stumbling excuses" (10). The narrator continues:

She had already discovered the awkwardness of quarrels between partners of a bed, but if she had known that she was beginning to walk in the holy footprints of Saint Katharine of Alexandria, she could not have wept longer when she discovered that the horrifying felicities of the holy bonds of matrimony sometimes follow the horrors of connubial fury, and when she discovered that a father and a mother are a man and a woman--that they are not only one flesh, but two. (10-11)

Initially this passage, the concluding passage of the first section, suggests Katharine's abhorrence of the sexual act. But the "horrors of connubial fury" are matched by "the horrifying felicities of the holy bonds of matrimony"--that is, marriage, not just sexuality, even in its happiest state horrifies Katharine Faraday. Witnessing her parents' sexuality, she discovers not only that her parents flesh out as "a man and a woman," but that the stories she has been reared to believe--that "mothers are as infallible as any

pope and more righteous than any saint" (10) and that marriage creates an idyllic "one flesh" that transcends bodily desires or concerns--are false. Katharine's naive faith in women as pure and virtuous, mothers as powerful, and marriage as heavenly union sways beneath the weight of the "primal scene" she witnesses.

Katharine Faraday, presumably prompted by newly revealed evidence of her mother's marital situation, will "walk in the holy footprints of Saint Katharine of Alexandria" not because she wants to be asexual, but because Saint Catherine of Alexandria offers an alternative story to the "virgin mother" story that has been exposed as a lie. A story which the Catholic church tried to erase, Catherine's story details a woman's refusal of patriarchal bonds of marriage.⁴⁰ Saint Catherine, "so wise she could demolish the arguments of fifty philosophers at once," refuses to marry the emperor, who then imprisons, tortures, and eventually kills her (Walker 149). Katharine Faraday, then, is fated

⁴⁰Barbara G. Walker suggests that Saint Catherine was "one of the most popular saints of all time--despite the fact that she never existed" and that she was "revered . . . almost as a female counterpart of God. Perhaps for this reason, in the 15th and 16th centuries, after the Cathari [the sect honoring her] were exterminated, Catholic prelates made efforts to have St. Catherine eliminated from the canon." The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983) 149. The church has since disclaimed her sainthood.

to grow to be more brilliant than the wisest men of her time, to refuse to marry a patriarch, and to be martyred for her choice.⁴¹ She is to become a "hard-boiled virgin." But this is not cause for her to weep any longer than she already has--and indeed, by the end, it may be cause to celebrate, for Newman's Katharine is not destined to be martyred for her choices. No matter how unsettled (or unsettling) the ending of the novel is, Katharine Faraday is in a position of self-determination, foremost a self-determination that arises because she chooses what to do with her body (having removed it from the typical trajectory of a marriage story), and is not subjected to anyone or anything but her own desires and determinations.

To identify Katharine as a virgin is therefore not to say that she suppresses her sexual desires in the service of her professional desires or even that she refuses sexual relations. She tells men that she is hopelessly virginal knowing that they will try immediately to prove otherwise, and in her final sentence, Newman suggests that Katharine

⁴¹Abbott links Mencken's comment that Newman had "more learning than fifty professors" (in Mencken's "Violets in the Sahara") to Newman's analogy of Katharine Faraday to Saint Catherine ("Purple Prejudices" 13). He goes on to suggest that Newman's critical writings "did 'take on' the male academy of her time and perform critical miracles" (14). I would add that Newman's fiction similarly confronts a male-controlled literary establishment--just as Newman portrays Katharine Faraday's writing as doing.

Faraday imagines herself telling yet another admirer that "he had shattered her last illusion"--that she "was hopelessly virginal" (284-5). Quite possibly, then, Katharine Faraday expects to have sex--but as a "virgin" who intends not to marry and who thus can maintain control over her own body and sexuality. Yet the most intense expressions of her sexuality are seemingly self-generated, occurring when she is alone. Though she often finds "her whole body burning" or "an alabaster lamp for the rising and falling glow of its electric spray" when she thinks of particular men, she is always distant from them (139, also 247); more often "she would feel her fountain rising and falling and dropping its electric spray down her body," a "rainbow spray," in moments of isolation (206, 259, also 263 and 272). When "she did not read anything or plan anything, . . . a fountain rose and fell and dropped its electric spray through her thin brown body" (75). Newman's virginal Katharine is not associated with the catherine wheel but the whirring dynamo. Both virgin and dynamo, her surname speaks her legacy.⁴²

⁴²Michael Faraday discovered electromagnetic induction and invented the first generator. Frank Daniel suggests that The Hard-Boiled Virgin's heroine's "last name is that of the discoverer of the principle of the dynamo, because falling in love has an electrical effect" on Katharine. "Frances Newman's Novel Draws From Atlanta Life," Atlanta Journal 13 November 1926. But of course, it is Katharine's

Such images recall Henry Adams's essay "The Dynamo and The Virgin"⁴³ which acknowledges that

in America neither Venus nor Virgin ever had value as force;--at most as sentiment. No American had ever been truly afraid of either. This problem in dynamics gravely perplexed an American historian. The Woman had once been supreme; in France she still seemed potent, not merely as a sentiment but as a force; why was she unknown in America? . . . [N]either Diana of the Ephesians nor any of the oriental Goddesses was worshipped for her beauty. She was Goddess because of her force; she was the animated dynamo; she was reproduction. . . .
(356)

Of course, the "reproduction" that Adams has in mind is female fertility (and not the reproduced "copy" Newman might formulate) and his complaint is that "the monthly-magazine-made American female had not a feature that would have been recognised by Adam" (356). He is interested in "Woman" only for her fertile symbolic value to men. Newman's interest, however, is precisely in the "monthly-magazine-made" women that Adams dismisses. Newman's novel seems to address Adams's grievance parodically by proposing in Katharine a figure that can help reconstitute American, particularly southern, women--a figure, simultaneously virgin and dynamo, removed from male definition, not needing men for

own sexuality that generates electrifying moments, not her love interests.

⁴³The Education of Henry Adams (1918; New York: Vintage, 1990) 352-62.

self-creation or sexual fulfillment. Newman's novel wrests "the power of sex" (Adams 357) from male control and relocates it in a self-generating feminine Faraday who empowers herself.

Newman insists, "I did not leave Katharine Faraday until the day when she realized that she was hopelessly virginal--until she was boiled hard, so to speak."⁴⁴ This is not an admission of defeat. The hard-boiling takes place in Katharine's favorite place for experiencing the sensations of her electric sexuality: a steaming bathtub. The "bath-room with its mirror and its window obliterated by steam" provides Katharine a refuge from a patriarchal gaze that might frame her as an object and a space in which to delight in and reimagine her own body (34). It is in the bathroom that she first explores her body--and not coincidentally, where she first authors alternative stories, stories to explain her body's features to herself (35-6). In fact, she must generate such stories through the experience of her body since convention insists that she be sheltered from her body (for example, her mother thinks that "good breeding required" her daughter to remain "in the state of innocence," ignorant of menstruation) (55). Rather

⁴⁴Frances Newman, letter to Thornton Wilder, 31 August 1926, Frances Newman's Letters, 207.

than suppress her body, Katharine Faraday celebrates it, tells stories about it, rewrites it and allows it to inform her storytelling. Newman imagines for Katharine Faraday an experience of body momentarily removed from cultural stories, an experience that gives Katharine resolve to resist those stories, that hard-boils her. Masquerading as a virgin, simultaneously deploying and rescripting the story of the virgin, Katharine Faraday regains "her" body and self-control.⁴⁵

⁴⁵Given the title and publication date, it is tempting to examine Newman's novel within the tradition of another genre familiar to readers of the era: the "hard-boiled" detective fiction produced by Dashiell Hammett and others. Newman's The Hard-Boiled Virgin could strike readers as a take-off of the pulp thrillers which emerged "as a revolt against the gentility and pretentiousness" characterizing earlier detective stories and which "bare[d] the widespread corruption of the social order." Robert A. Baker and Michael T. Nietzel, Private Eyes: One Hundred and One Knights, A Survey of American Detective Fiction 1922-1984 (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State U Popular P, 1985) 4; John Cawelti, Adventure, Mystery and Romance (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1976) 157. However little they have in common stylistically, Newman's and popular detective novels' social functions seem aligned.

Like Newman's Katharine Faraday, the detective maintains his gendered integrity by hard-boiling himself especially in terms of his sexuality, for sex in these stories "is an object of pleasure, yet it also has a disturbing tendency to become a temptation, a trap, and a betrayal" (Cawelti 153). But no one would call these men frigid or maladjusted as reviewers did Katharine Faraday; indeed, many of the detectives portrayed in these fictions enter into romantic liaisons but refuse lasting commitment--just like Newman's Katharine. The detective's "way of life may look like failure, but actually it is a form of rebellion, a rejection of the ordinary concepts of success and respectability" (Cawelti 144).

Though neither of the two main characters of Dead Lovers Are Faithful Lovers (1928) gains the control over her own story that The Hard-Boiled Virgin's Katharine Faraday does, Newman's last novel nonetheless offers a radically different version of women's places in the familiar love-and-marriage story that circumscribes privileged women's lives. It may be, as T. S. Matthews asserts, that "the story itself is . . . an old one" but the effect of Newman's telling leads another reviewer to recognize its newness, remarking that the novel articulates what "men have tried . . . to avoid hearing."⁴⁶ Such a statement suggests that Newman's novel masquerades, in the sense elaborated by Irigaray, "mak[ing] 'visible'" the "ideas about [women], that are elaborated in/by a masculine logic," ideas that are "supposed to remain invisible."⁴⁷

The first half of Dead Lovers Are Faithful Lovers focuses on Evelyn Page Cunningham, wife of railroad executive Charlton Cunningham; the perspective shifts suddenly (literally with a glance) at the novel's midpoint into another "modulation," focusing on Isabel Ramsay,

⁴⁶Matthews, "Fancy Goods" 153; Isabel Paterson, "Phantom Lover" 3.

⁴⁷This Sex Which Is Not One 76.

would-be mistress to Charlton Cunningham.⁴⁸ Another glance produces a final shift back to the wife's perspective for the novel's close. Its plot might superficially seem to retell the familiar entanglement of a man loving two women, one the faithful wife, the other the corrupting mistress. The novel's point of view, focus, and sympathetic portrayal of both women, however, defy such easy classifications. The women never actually meet, and their "stories" remain separate for all but the reader, who discovers an amazing alignment between the two figures. Although Isabel Ramsay is a self-sufficient working woman, her life mirrors the narrow existence of the genteel traditional lady, Evelyn Cunningham.

In fact, the shift in narrative perspective from one woman to the other at the novel's midpoint and end does not radically alter the narrative: the two women think alike, often unknowingly repeating the other's very words, thoughts, and actions. Newman's text thus sets up the independent mistress and the dependent wife as "mirror images" of each other, as though even very different,

⁴⁸Newman discussed the shift in perspective as "modulations from one mind to another," as though the women she was portraying were simply variations on the same theme. See letters to Hansell Baugh, 29 January 1928, and Sylvia Chatfield Bates, 30 January 1928, Frances Newman's Letters 305-306.

presumably antagonistic, women occupy a "shared" position in the South. Dead Lovers Are Faithful Lovers focuses on the lives of wife and mistress, in what Newman would define as the best tradition of feminist novels, "to show the emptiness of most women's lives."⁴⁹

To do this, Dead Lovers Are Faithful Lovers begins just when earlier stories would end--with the marital threshold crossed. However, no "dark misfortune" awaits the prosperously married Evelyn, who, as the title implies, receives the death of her husband not as a blow but a triumph. She never even learns of Isabel's existence. The "happy ending" of marriage in Newman's novel is thus ironic: the novel and the marriage literally end happily with the husband's death, not the bride's procession. Neither is the marriage itself the blissful achievement that love-and-marriage tales promise: illustrating the painful constriction of a wife's life, the novel chronicles Evelyn Cunningham's obsessive anxiety over and effort to stem her husband's loss of interest in her.

By beginning her story after the affirmation of the formal union that serves as resolution in traditional

⁴⁹Newman thus praised Walter Lionel George's The Second Blooming in her regular "Library Notes" column, Atlanta Constitution 2 August 1920. Rpt. In Abbott, "Purple Prejudices" 84.

romances (Evelyn is on a train, returning from her honeymoon), Newman can reveal marriage as a manifestation of a woman's lack of self rather than as an achievement marking a woman's entry into adulthood. Newman thus exposes Evelyn Cunningham's story as delineated by patriarchal controls over the female body, beginning only after Evelyn stands "before the church's altar and its rector," offering herself up in marriage. More significantly, Evelyn's story begins only after her first socially sanctioned sexual encounters.⁵⁰ For it is "the bishop of Virginia and the rector of Saint Paul's church" that give Evelyn the "legal right to open her eyes and see" herself positioned next to a husband, literally to "open her eyes and see her very light brown hair lying against Charlton Cunningham's very dark brown hair" (9). The first episode in fact emphasizes that this positioning is the most important aspect of Evelyn's (non)identity--she is admitted not a name but a status as a possession, identified only as "Charlton Cunningham's wife."

Even on a psychic level, Evelyn is possessed by her husband. This is the whole of Evelyn's marriage, her life:

during all the minutes between nine o'clock and five o'clock, she might listen politely and talk

⁵⁰Newman, Dead Lovers Are Faithful Lovers (1928; Athens: U of Georgia P, 1994) 46, 73. Subsequent parenthetical references to Dead Lovers Are Faithful Lovers will be to this edition.

politely, and drink tea with one lump of sugar and one slice of lemon, and embroider her four initials on napkins of unmistakably Austrian damask, and say three no-trumps and then prove that she had been justified in raising her partner's bid, and dip dark green artichoke leaves into yellow hollandaise sauce, and read the biographies of all the most celebrated enchantresses of history--but . . . she was waiting for him during all those eight hours, and waiting just as consciously as she had been waiting since she had looked down at her little blue clock and seen that at last the shorter hand was pointing to a silver five, and the longer hand was pointing to a silver twelve. (57)

When her husband is late, she "did not even have to decide that she would rather" find out that he was dead than find out that he had been delayed by stopping for a cocktail, for then "she would not be able to think that he could still love her" (59). The novel's purpose as Newman conceived it, to show "that an important man's wife had no existence of her own, usually,"⁵¹ undermines dominant stories that idealize marriage and romantic union.

Newman's novel also reveals the atrophy of self that can attend any woman who lives for a man. The narratorial perspective heightens the sense that both women are alienated from or deprived of real "self." For example, that Isabel's "mind was carefully arranging an explanation for something she called herself" implies that though Isabel

⁵¹Frances Newman, letter to Hansell Baugh, 28 May 1928, Frances Newman's Letters 349.

thinks she has an identifiable self, she is mistaken (286). In fact, both Isabel and Evelyn lack a sense of their own identities outside of male referent. For both women, all time is "dead" if not spent in the embrace of Charlton's gaze. Evelyn seems to "reckon from Charlton Cunningham exactly as the rest of the world reckons from Greenwich," but Isabel too constantly calculates the painful hours away from Charlton (53). The women endure his absence, waiting for his presence to make them feel alive again. Thus both women fasten on the clock, Evelyn "think[ing] of all the endurable and all the unendurable reasons which could be keeping her husband away . . . from a room where he could see her and touch her" (58-9) and Isabel "thinking of all the bearable and unbearable reasons which could be keeping him away from the room where he could see her and touch her" (276) and both women feeling the same flooding relief when they see that he "was walking as quickly as she could wish towards the room where he could see her and touch her" (60, 277). Charlton does all the seeing and touching; from the beginning of the novel until Charlton's death, women have "waiting lips," "waiting bodies," "waiting necks," "waiting hands," and "waiting eyes" (11, 62, 232, 252-3, 257). The sole reference to Isabel's (nameless) mother assures readers that Isabel's father's "wife had been awaiting him for

twenty years" to join her in the grave (230). Even death does not relieve women of their waiting on and for men who determine their identities.

Just as Newman reveals how the seemingly fragmentary existences of the women take on meaning only when in the presence of Charlton, she notes how the woman's very body is a product of and dependent upon heterosexual relations. While the women are represented as body parts when away from Charlton, in his presence, Charlton Cunningham's gaze joins all of Evelyn's fragmented parts so that her "head and throat and two arms and something called a figure" literally "unite . . . and become her body" only after she is in "the room where he could see her and touch her" (12, 51). Similarly, Isabel sees herself as a collection of "her hair and her cheeks and her lips and her frock and her slippers" but Charlton "looked at her as if she were a woman" (268, 202-3).

Their sense of integratedness depends upon his unifying gaze, but their sense of embodiment depends upon his sexual involvement. Sexuality grants Evelyn a body: her "strange figure . . . united with her familiar head . . . [to] become her body" after sexual intercourse (51). Evelyn had (was?) no body that could be recognized as such before her marriage. The more independent Isabel sees that she has a

body, but for her, the virgin body is an "unused body," as though a woman cannot make use of her own body until it is properly "used" sexually by someone else (271). Isabel's identity as virgin is as much a product of male definition and control as Evelyn's identity as wife: Isabel would like to "make Charlton Cunningham forget that he was saving her from himself for himself," but he would not "forget that she could not come to him until she could come to him in the legal and immaculate state in which a southern gentleman thinks he should receive his bride" (271, also 266). Isabel wants to act upon her desire, but Charlton insists that she restrain herself until he can place her, the virgin, into his "proper" story as his wife, not his mistress. This is "for himself" rather than for her. She is left with an alienated "unused" and "waiting" body, feeling maimed rather than whole, a "gnawed on" body, "her whole mind and her whole body . . . cut into the heavy ugly minutes" of waiting for him (see 272-274, 283).

In their focus on Charlton, both women deny and suppress affinities with other women and, in fact, imagine that all women's primary concerns are their relations to men. Isabel and Evelyn anchor their value solely in relation to men, feeling threatened with dissolution unless they constantly monitor and regulate their bodies in

accordance with an internalized patriarchal gaze. It is unsurprising then that, flanking a mirror, on one side of Evelyn's vanity stands a "photograph of her husband's dark thin face" and a "photograph of her father's dark thin face [rests] on the other side," patriarchs symbolically placed in perpetual evaluation of and supervision over the woman's image (27). Both women constantly assess their likeness to dominant images of beauty identified only by men--Charlton, other male admirers, male artists, and their fathers. Evelyn's dressing table is centered between art prints of women that past beaux admired and presented to her. Looking at these blue-framed portraits immediately and daily makes Evelyn assess in her own blue-framed mirror how she does not measure up and prompts her to increase her efforts to reflect an idealized model (48-9).

Gripped with anxiety, Evelyn rises every morning before Charlton awakens to relentlessly "tend" her reflection, equipped with "little jars and bottles and boxes and brushes and combs," trying always to frame her image into a "careful reproduction" of the image that initially attracted Charlton's desire (13, 27). Her beauty regimen is ritualized, focused always on Charlton: the items on her vanity "were standing in front of [her husband's image] as burning white candles and a little basin of holy water might

have stood" and "she opened [the jars and bottles and boxes] as she might have lighted white candles before the photograph, and she poured out the pale liquids as she might have poured holy water into its basin" (26, 53). She beseeches a pointedly "masculine God" to help her achieve a perfected image lest she lose her husband's interest.

Isabel is similarly obsessed with the tending and display of her body for Charlton's eyes. Like Evelyn, she carefully powders "every inch" of her "white body" before slipping it into the chemise that will certainly attract Charlton Cunningham's attention (14, 270). Like Evelyn, she slips perfume across her skin, all the while thinking not of her own body but of what Charlton will be sensing (18, 272). Both women give "careful ministrations" to bodies they relentlessly "tend" and intend only for Charlton's use (see 53, 233, 267, 14, 18, 54, 65). Sandra Bartky argues that "what is often [woman's] compulsive or even ritualistic character" concerning the "making-up" of her body is a "pervasive sense of bodily deficiency."⁵² Evelyn's and Isabel's sense of "deficiency" stems, Newman's novel

⁵²Sandra Lee Bartky, "Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power," Feminism and Foucault: Paths to Resistance, eds. Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby (Boston: Northeastern UP, 1988). Rpt. In Sandra Lee Bartky, Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression (New York: Routledge, 1990) 136-7.

reveals, from the women's assumption of the male expectations of femininity. Evelyn and Isabel do not use their paint and powder as does Newman's other major female character, Katharine Faraday, strategically to gain some measure of agency. Instead, Evelyn's and Isabel's making-up frames them always as failed or failing objects: art objects, objects of the male gaze, even the continually deferred grammatical objects of their own sentences. All that they do is for him: they want to seamlessly conform to--to become--the man's desire.

Dead Lovers Are Faithful Lovers' two main characters vividly illustrate that male focus defines the dominant forms of femininity given expression in identities accessible to privileged women ("virgin," "bride," "wife," "mistress"). In its closing, the novel reiterates that men frame women's identities "for men" by confronting a remaining identity available to women: "mother." Playing with the notion of maternity instituted through love-and-marriage stories, the novel suggests such domestic tales reproduce bodies of women that grotesquely contain or nurture masculine interests. While Isabel

knew that the most feminine part of any woman's body can always slowly expand to surround something which is going to become her child, she did not suspect that her feminine imagination had been aching for a month because it had been stretching more tightly to surround an image of

Charlton Cunningham which had been growing more enormous. (251)

Internalizing the image of Charlton Cunningham, Isabel reproduces not herself, but him, within her own imagination. Her metaphorized body bloats with his expansion. Evelyn, who has fearfully considered the effects of a pregnancy on her body and upon her "husband's affections" (which, Evelyn's experience indicates, would more than likely not survive his wife's giving birth), carries Isabel's version of "pregnancy" fully into a kind of "birth" at the novel's end. As she rides the train that is carrying her husband's body home for burial, Evelyn "opened her bag and took out a little photograph, . . . the picture of the baby who was already Charlton Cunningham twenty-seven years before she had seen him" (292). The scene suggests a (perverse) rebirth or transcendence of patriarchal culture that sustains men even beyond death--carried on through the body and apparel of the woman. The widow gives birth to the infantile husband, faithful at last, and Evelyn will continue in "a life decorously emptied of everything except the rising and lunching and dining and worshipping and lying down of a woman who would go on being a great lady," tending to the memory of her husband and father (293). Every identity granted privileged women--wife, daughter, mother,

widow, virgin--nurtures patriarchal relations and inequities, Newman's novel argues. Isabel, the supposedly more liberated of the two women, is not much better off in such a world. She will presumably continue in her librarian's position, circulating other people's stories, shelving books with "the same cheerfulness Marie Antoinette might have felt when she remembered that she need not worry about the hat she would wear back from the guillotine" (172). Both women are essentially hollowed vessels produced by and producing the patriarchy.

Susan Bordo has argued that "through table manners and toilet habits, through seemingly trivial routines, rules and practices, culture is 'made body,' regulated to the point of seeming naturalness, reproducing gender, the regulation itself hidden."⁵³ In Newman's novel, the regulation is not hidden: we have witnessed how hard Evelyn must work to bring "her hair to just the intimately unfinished state in which she wanted her husband to find it" (55), the pain attending Isabel's "careful ministrations to the white body she was not sure Charlton Cunningham would not see" (267). Newman's novel brilliantly exposes this regulation; routines that produce female bodies, rather than seeming "trivial"

⁵³Susan Bordo, Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body (Berkeley: U of California P, 1993) 165.

and unworthy of narrative consideration, are focused upon obsessively. Newman throws open the dressing room and bathroom doors, revealing the daily and hourly repetitions and routines fashioning the female body. The narrative sympathy for and attentiveness to Evelyn and Isabel suggest that Newman's exposure of the construction of female bodies functions as a critique not so much of the women she portrays but of the culture that reinforces a dominant image of femininity framed entirely by male desire and interest. Her novel is thus a kind of masquerade, simultaneously dressing up and exposing the masculine logic behind enactments of femininity, making "the 'natural' 'unnatural'--cultural or historical."⁵⁴

Although Evelyn's and Isabel's "masquerades" remain invisible to the characters within the text, readers of Newman's novel confront the two women's elaborate masquerade and its motivation. Readers also are forced to consider the attenuation of women's selves and lives brought about by their enactments of femininity. When Evelyn and Isabel exchange looks, the women must see what everyone else in the novel does: Evelyn sees Isabel's "grey-eyed beauty [seeming] too calm and too quiet and too cool" and Isabel wonders "if Mrs. Charlton Cunningham could possibly feel as

⁵⁴Pamela Robertson, Guilty Pleasures 12.

calm and as complacent as she looked" (148-49). By this point, however, readers know the frantic anxiety and effort underneath Evelyn's exterior; soon, readers will see Isabel's similar state. They are reflections, of each other, of perhaps all women, whose surface appearances cannot be trusted, Newman's novel warns. To reveal so many copies is to reveal that there is no fixed and naturalized feminine, but that femininity is itself a construction, particularly, the novel stresses, a construction framed by and for men. With its unwavering focus, Dead Lovers Are Faithful Lovers manages to depict the stultifying effect that the dominant form of femininity has on diverse women.

The novel also conveys that femininity as construction can be revised--if not in the novel, in the reader's imagination; it leaves agency with women. Truly subversive parodic repetitions, Butler asserts, will "invert the inner/outer distinction and compel a radical rethinking of the psychological presuppositions of gender identity and sexuality" as well as perform gender in a way that "will enact and reveal the performativity of gender itself."⁵⁵ Newman's problematizing of "natural" female identities forces a reassessment of terms and assumptions. By concentrating on the constructions of Evelyn's and Isabel's

⁵⁵Gender Trouble 139.

bodies and the boundaries of their stories, Dead Lovers Are Faithful Lovers functions subversively, for it calls into question the naturalness and fixidity of gender identity and the propriety of the stories that most women live to fulfill--stories that men have a stake in promoting.

Newman's career was devoted to redressing men's stories, a case made most evident by her criticism. A piece typical of Newman's critical sensibilities and humor, a review of a new Booth Tarkington story, "Literary Millinery"⁵⁶ furnishes readers with one of Tarkington's female character's description of an evening gown: "'She gets that way sometimes, and pretended [sic] she hadn't made up her mind,' said Alice to her mother, 'but I'm pretty sure it'll be the maize georgette with Malines flounces.'" ⁵⁷

Newman continues:

There isn't any question about Mr. Tarkington's understanding of Penrod and clothes or of Willie Baxter and his father's evening clothes or the "waiter suit" he was going to buy by counting shingles, or whatever it was. But when it comes to dressing a lady, it would bring him on wonderfully to take in Vogue or even to read the fashion page in his New York paper. Now that fashion magazines and drapers' catalogs have taken to "clever" description of their frocks, gentlemen authors could easily find ready-made an excellent

⁵⁶Published in Atlanta Constitution 19 June 1921. Rpt. In Abbott, "Purple Prejudices" 148-151.

⁵⁷Tarkington's text as Newman cites it. Rpt. in Abbott, "Purple Prejudices" 148.

frock, a smart hat, and any other sartorial triumph the heroine just back from Paris might require. . . .

If anyone has said Malines since Mr. Tarkington was a leading juvenile he has not been overheard. And though the enticing descriptions of "negligees at something" and war tax do sometimes mention maize and orchid and Harding blue, girls with no "background" probably very seldom say anything more elaborate than yellow when they are reporting to their mothers. Whether because Mildred was wearing her maize georgette with Maline [sic] flounces or in spite of it, our Alice decided to wear "my white organdie if you could put in a new lining for me," and poor mama spent some five hours putting in the new lining, in spite of the fact that organdies never had linings and nothing except coats has had a lining since the day when a slender Mrs. Patrick Campbell trailed four yards of the best satin across the stage in Magda. It seems quite sad for mama to have had all that unnecessary trouble.

. . . At nine o'clock, Alice stood before her long mirror and surveyed the dress "not rumpled by her mother's careful hours of work"--has Mr. Tarkington no knowledge of the nature of organdie or the existence of electric irons?⁵⁸

The anomaly of Newman's stance in the 1920s is inadvertently summed up by Virginia Woolf: "Speaking crudely, football and sport are 'important'; the worship of fashion, the buying of clothes 'trivial.' And these values are inevitably transferred from life to fiction."⁵⁹ Newman's comments are clearly not fashionable: Newman shows that attention to clothes is not in the least "trivial." In fact, the focus

⁵⁸Passages in quotation marks are Tarkington's as cited by Newman. Rpt. In Abbott, "Purple Prejudices" 148-49.

⁵⁹A Room of One's Own 74.

of her critique of Tarkington's work is his poor fashioning for the female body. Newman's own informed experience in frock-wearing is the privileged perspective, enabling her to point out that Tarkington does not speak authoritatively. Satirically reframing the feminine as a site of knowledge and real experience, Newman points out only "the things that every woman knows" or "can probably find out" but which Tarkington and, she asserts, nearly all male writers ignore (150). Fashion magazines--along with Newman herself--become in this light the expert, authoritative sources that serious writers ought to heed. With great fun, Newman uses the genre of the serious literary review as an arena to talk about one of her passions, clothes.

Newman fashions the feminine role to ridicule the falseness of Tarkington's representation of women and their lives, implying the male author's own perspective is too particular, too limited, too gendered. His inability to conceive of women's "real" speech ("girls . . . very seldom say anything more elaborate than yellow when they are reporting to their mothers") and his lack of awareness of women's "real" labors ("It seems quite sad for mama to have had all that unnecessary trouble" and "has Mr. Tarkington no knowledge of the nature of organdie or the existence of electric irons?") illustrate that Tarkington is no authority

on the female subject. Moreover, Newman claims that Tarkington isn't alone in his faltering. She concludes that there are few "exceptions to this masculine difficulty" of properly outfitting women (150). By implication, then, men who cannot get the dress right ought not bother to tailor women at all. Her comments, draped in the rhetoric of critical judgment, successfully promote the need to account for female experience by employing the very terms that have dismissed that experience as incidental, as not the proper material for serious work. Suddenly the shoe is on the other foot, and a man who does not write/dress women "properly" is dismissed by female authority as not a proper author. The review is parodic in the manner of masquerade, dismantling tenets of a social order's representation of gender by deploying them.

Where does the masquerade leave Newman's readers, however? Newman's ladies are all made up, but where have they gone and what did they do? While Donald Davidson rejected The Hard-Boiled Virgin as "mere[ly] autobiographical," Thornton Wilder told Newman "that he fe[lt] like a woman as well as a man since he read it."⁶⁰ If Davidson's dismissal reflects the normalizing discourse that

⁶⁰Frances Newman, letter to Horace Liveright, 19 August 1926, Frances Newman's Letters, 205.

discredited the important particularity of her voice, Wilder's statement, inviting images of a kind of cultural crossdressing, implies that Newman's fiction offered an alternative story that made imagining alternative ways of being possible, at least momentarily. The strategy of masquerade allowed such moments to arise, moments marking the tiny ruptures in larger stories. How can we assess the ripples caused by Newman's representations in the fluidity of cultural exchange, especially over so much time? We have only the assurance of Newman's contemporaries of Newman's influence: shortly after Newman's death, for instance, Emily Clark notes her good fortune to have witnessed "the dramatic development of the Atlanta librarian into one of the arresting literary figures of the last decade." "Throughout her life," Clark notes, "[Frances] was wholly capable" of "tell[ing] her own story."⁶¹

Certainly Newman's fiction upset her world's conventions and ideas, her most (re)visionary novel, The Hard-Boiled Virgin, even banned from distribution in Boston. And Newman's masquerading seems to have invited retribution and dismissal on a personal level, indicating that the author herself was something of a threat. For instance, the

⁶¹Innocence Abroad (New York: Knopf, 1931; Westport: Greenwood P, 1975) 210.

story circulated that her death was a suicide, prompted by her deviation from the "normal" lifestyle of a woman.⁶² Such efforts made to contain her person and her work, to fit them into a narrative not disruptive to dominant stories, seem to have been effective: it is Davidson's estimation of Newman's writing that has stood for so long, only recently challenged by literary historians. But, if only briefly, Newman's fictions invited readers to masquerade, and her work circulated as alternative representation, a staged resistance to popular depictions of rebellious women ultimately finding fulfillment only in love and marriage. The limitations of masquerade as a revisionary practice emerge in the flapper, the subject of the next chapter.

⁶²See Anne Goodwyn Jones, Tomorrow is Another Day, 280.

CHAPTER 4
DANCING AND DOMESTICITY:
COMPETING STORIES OF THE SOUTHERN FLAPPER

[T]he Flapper awoke from her lethargy of sub-deb-ism, bobbed her hair, put on her choicest pair of earrings and a great deal of audacity and rouge, and went into the battle. She flirted because it was fun to flirt and wore a one-piece bathing suit because she had a good figure; she covered her face with powder and paint because she didn't need it and she refused to be bored chiefly because she wasn't boring. She was conscious that the things she did were the things she had always wanted to do.¹

[T]he old Southern town is the finished product of a former civilization. . . . [I]n Milledge, [Georgia,] . . . you have the scene laid in which Anne Capers established her headquarters and waged such a scandalous campaign for life, liberty, and happiness as has rarely been conducted against the manners, customs, and traditions of decent society. I am not condemning her, you understand, I am simply using the standard dictionary terms to indicate the nature of her performances. . . .²

In southern studies there are southern belles, southern ladies, southern mulattas and mammies, but no southern flappers--despite evidence of flappers doing their flapping below the Mason-Dixon line. As early as 1921, for example,

¹Zelda Fitzgerald, "Eulogy on the Flapper," Metropolitan Magazine June 1922; rpt. in The Collected Writings: Zelda Fitzgerald, ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli (London: Little, Brown, 1991) 391.

²Corra Harris, Flapper Anne (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1925) 6, 11-12.

at least two southern states, Virginia and South Carolina, were concerned enough about their young women adopting the flapper's risqué attire for legislators to introduce bills "that would limit skirts to three or four inches above the ankle and outlaw transparent material in blouses."³ In the mid-twenties, a floor collapsed at Georgia State College for Women as 500 young women danced the frenetic Charleston.⁴ Even Margaret Mitchell, the chronicler of the most famous images of the South and its women, felt the censure of a scandalized Atlanta high society after she danced "too strenuously" at a debutante ball to cultivate her reputation as a vamp.⁵ Literary depictions of southern flappers in popular works of the 1920s and 30s such as William Faulkner's Sanctuary, Ellen Glasgow's The Romantic Comedians, and Corra Harris's Flapper Anne suggest that the figure was a familiar one to southerners.

³Gerald E. Critoph, "The Flapper and Her Critics," "Remember the Ladies": New Perspectives on Women in American History, ed. Carol V. R. George (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1975) 151.

⁴Paula S. Fass, The Damned and the Beautiful (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1977) 466.

⁵See Darden Asbury Pyron, Southern Daughter: The Life of Margaret Mitchell (New York: Oxford UP, 1991) 107-9, and Anne Goodwyn Jones, Tomorrow Is Another Day (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1981) 330.

The image of the flapper now seems as representative of 1920's America as jazz and speakeasies. And with jazz, the flapper has particular resonance for and a special root in southern culture. In 1931, Emily Clark, editor for The Reviewer, pointed to the collaborative creation of the flapper during the previous decade: "A boy just out of Princeton had written This Side of Paradise, and he and Zelda Fitzgerald between them had just invented flappers."⁶ The most famous of flappers, Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald, hailed from the elite of Montgomery, Alabama. Fitzgerald scholars acknowledge that Zelda Sayre functioned as the model for her husband's portraits of flappers, and indeed, many of Scott

⁶Emily Clark, Innocence Abroad (1931; Westport: Greenwood P, 1975) 4. Accounts of the use and derivation of the term "flapper" vary, but none discusses the "southernness" of the American flapper. Scott Fitzgerald's This Side of Paradise is often credited, but Sean Dennis Cashman in America in the Twenties and Thirties (New York: New York UP, 1989) credits H. L. Mencken with introducing the term, already in widespread use in Britain, to the U.S. in 1915 (57). Billie Melman's Women and the Popular Imagination in the Twenties: Flappers and Nymphs (New York: St. Martin's P, 1988) confirms that as early as the 1870s in Britain "flapper" denotes a young woman and that by the twenties, the term had become connected to women pushing for suffrage in that country (see 27-30). However, Lois Banner's American Beauty (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1983) determines that the name arose from "a style of flapping galoshes popular among young women before the war" (279). Paula Fass's study of 1920's American youth, The Damned and the Beautiful, indicates that the galoshes were themselves called "flappers" (231). (The Oxford English Dictionary does not mention galoshes in any of its definitions for "flapper.")

Fitzgerald's fictional flappers share his wife's southern heritage, a regional affiliation upon which his stories' plots and themes capitalize.⁷ Nonetheless, the Fitzgerald Flapper defines a seemingly non-regionalized "American" era. Sumiko Higashi's comments about Zelda Fitzgerald illustrate the critical tendency to divest this flapper of regional associations: Zelda Sayre is "a rebellious Southern belle when she met Scott" but becomes, in Higashi's discussion, "the first American flapper" only after she marries him--despite the fact that she adhered to flapper style and behavior before her engagement, marriage, and move from home.⁸

Like the rest of the nation, the 1920s South witnessed skirmishes between a "youth culture"--symbolized especially by the energetic flapper--and the orthodox parental authority it seemingly defied. "The young had come to represent the unhinging of the social order," Paula Fass

⁷See Diane Roberts, Faulkner and Southern Womanhood (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1994) 107.

⁸Sumiko Higashi, Virgins, Vamps, and Flappers (Montreal: Eden P, 1978) 190; Peter Kurth notes, "By the time she turned eighteen she was already drinking (and drinking heavily), smoking cigarettes and bobbing her hair" in "A Portrait of Zelda Fitzgerald," Zelda, An Illustrated Life: The Private World of Zelda Fitzgerald, ed. Eleanor Lanahan (New York: Abrams, 1996) 20. Also see Nancy Milford, Zelda: A Biography (New York: Harper & Row, 1970) 14-62.

writes, "and the journals of the twenties were filled with an image of youth out of control, of energy released from social restraints, and of raw forces unleashed. . . . The behaviour of youth was defiant, raunchy, implicitly sexual."⁹ Fass notes, however, that "a special apprehension was reserved for the manners and attitudes of young women" of the era, for "it was the change in female behaviour which underlined the overall [social] changes that had taken place."¹⁰ So it is not surprising that literary historian Diane Roberts describes the American South of the twenties as wrangling specifically with "the limits of the feminine, [with] the play between growing social freedom and hardening traditional values," a "play" ultimately foreclosed, Roberts writes, by a "southern retrenchment into an heroic and mythic past with a particular place for white women."¹¹ Kathryn Lee Seidel argues that precisely because they embodied a "new morality . . . , not necessarily preferable to the old, but [a morality that] place[d] the old order in a new perspective," the young southern white women depicted in twenties' literature mediate "myths at the core of

⁹Fass 20-1.

¹⁰Fass 23.

¹¹Roberts 13.

southern consciousness."¹² But Roberts and Seidel avoid identifying the young southern woman of the turbulent twenties as a flapper.

Instead Roberts points to a strikingly flapperesque "New Belle" in whom "the oppositions between masculine and feminine, virgin and whore are disabled" and who thus "pioneers a bisexual space, challenging the hundred years of piety that went into her construction."¹³ Kathryn Lee Seidel draws stronger demarcations between the flapper and the belle, insisting that the "southern belle" characters presented in twenties' and thirties' literature, despite their departures from "traditional southern ethics" and even when placed in "candid sexual scenes," are never flappers, "whose brash conversation and brazen behavior are entirely antithetical to the image of the sheltered and repressed southern woman."¹⁴ "[A]fraid of innovation, of smoking cigarettes, and of the 'new freedom,'" the southern lady is, Seidel insists, "no flapper."¹⁵

¹²Kathryn Lee Seidel, The Southern Belle in the American Novel (Tampa: U of South Florida P, 1985) 31.

¹³Roberts 103.

¹⁴Seidel 31.

¹⁵Seidel 33. Seidel is paraphrasing Sara Haardt, with whom she agrees.

Seidel's work does point to moments when particular characters could be "read" as flappers because of their bodily presence, that is, by the representation of a sexualized body through "insinuating" actions, dress, and sexual intercourse.¹⁶ Though each of these fictional "bodies" represents a defiance to a traditional set of social norms, on each occasion, Seidel is quick to point out that the texts themselves indicate none of the women involved are really flappers or ought to be read as such. (In discussing works in which the flapper figure might be expected to arise more unabashedly--either of the Fitzgeralds' works or Faulkner's Sanctuary, for example--Seidel omits reference to flappers.) Representations of the female body cause Seidel to pause to consider the southern lady's possible relation to flappers; the image of southern ladyhood causes her to dismiss it. In this chapter, I want to consider the possibility of reading the images of the lady and the flapper through each other.

The very evidence attesting to the entrenched presence of flappers in the South--the legislation monitoring the length and sheerness of women's clothing and the reports of flappers' frenetic dancing, for instance--also explains why the figure is dismissed as a sectional type: the southern

¹⁶See Seidel 87, 99, and 150.

flapping woman was privileged and white and clearly had a body. Roberts, Seidel, Anne Jones and Louise Westling have argued convincingly that the idea of southern nation, an idea that needed to be preserved for a distinctive regionality to be perpetuated, is intricately tied to the representation of white women as pure, chaste, selfless, and virtually bodiless. Flappers generated debate because their bodily presence and presentation clashed with representations of womanhood associated with middle- and upper-class white women, representations that were particularly potent in the South.

Fass has connected women's roles in the 1920's with a changing national identity:

[E]verything about the young, no matter how seemingly minor, threatened the traditionalist. Language, manners, clothes, pastimes, each undercut the uniform commitment to the traditional moral order. . . . Gazing at the young women of the period, the traditionalist saw the end of American civilization as he had known it. Its firm and robust outlines, best symbolized by the stable mother secure in her morality and content in her home, were pushed aside and replaced by the giddy flapper, rouged and clipped, careening in a drunken stupor to the lewd strains of a jazz quartet.¹⁷

Southern identity was more overtly tied to a traditional representation of womanhood than was national identity, and a southern patriarchy was invested in retaining management

¹⁷Fass 25.

over female bodily expression and the production of "contained" white female bodies. Through their dance and dress, flappers exposed sexualized bodies and, more importantly, their control over--or perhaps the very uncontrollability of--those bodies. The flapper's corporeal representation racily confused gender categories and transgressed class, race, and sexual boundaries. By examining the tension between bodies, definitions, and the stories (and histories) that they generate, this chapter explores ways in which the image of the flapper renegotiates the image of the lady, and in doing so, redefines privileged southern womanhood.

The Flap over Flappers: "She's Not What Grandma Used to Be"

"Her speed is great, but her control
Is something else again."¹⁸

Dorothy Parker wryly noted the real threat of the flapper on a national social front: "Her girlish ways may make a stir, / Her manners cause a scene, / But there is no more harm in her / Than in a submarine."¹⁹ Yet the flapper's modeling of a new femininity bore serious implications for a region ideologically bound to an idealized and presumably timeless definition of womanhood.

¹⁸Dorothy Parker, "The Flapper," Life 26 January 1922: 22; 11. 3, 11-12.

¹⁹Parker 11. 5-8.

The rhetoric with which Diane Roberts describes the South's "retrenchment" targets the twenties as a time of siege against southern mores specifically, and locates in the flapper a new brand of femininity launching a powerful strike against the region's "hardening" traditions.

In fact, Parker's association of the flapper with a wartime danger is echoed by her southern contemporaries' descriptions of a flapper gearing up and heading into battle. Zelda Fitzgerald sees the flapper's bodily adornment and audacious behavior as not only negations of a debutante identity but preparations for "the battle" of self-fulfillment, and Corra Harris identifies her flapper "headquarter[ed]" in Georgia as similarly "wag[ing] . . . a scandalous campaign . . . against the manners, customs, and traditions of decent society" to secure "life, liberty, and happiness." "She mobilized herself," Zelda Fitzgerald would write of the young flapper in Save Me The Waltz (1932): "She dressed herself for school with liberal gestures, bending forward to watch the movements of her body."²⁰ In "mobilizing" her body, the flapper belle would deploy a "self" antagonistic to her world.

²⁰Zelda Fitzgerald, Save Me the Waltz (1932); rpt. in The Collected Writings: Zelda Fitzgerald, ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli (London: Little, Brown, 1991) 13.

This flapper broke convention seemingly without a care, smoking, drinking, swearing, and petting openly, refusing to obey authority or behave as suited a traditional womanly nature. Thus, the flapper mobilized, if only momentarily, stories of alternate femininities accessible to upper-class white women--enactments that resisted the logic of normative womanhood and inaugurated new possibilities of female activity, resistance, pleasurable self-fulfillment, and expression of desire. Zelda Fitzgerald celebrated the bodies produced through flapperdom precisely because they reflected a philosophy of womanhood centered upon an idea of female self and self-control oppositional to the "selflessness" valued as normative. Mainstream publications railed against the "unnatural" flapper's new values:

Every girl who shirks marriage because its homely duties are irksome, every woman who refuses to have children, every mother who needlessly delivers her home and her children into the care of a servant is using her saw-toothed ax on progress. And in selfishly seeking her own comfort or satisfying her personal ambitions, she smothers her womanhood.²¹

According to this writer, the proper new woman "through her new freedom elects to serve others"; indeed, those who are self-serving are not women at all.

²¹Harriet Abbott, "What the Newest New Woman Is," The Ladies' Home Journal August 1920, 154.

Zelda Fitzgerald articulated a counter-position. Her biographer notes that "[w]hat Zelda intended to avoid at all costs was her vision of the legion of unhappy women, saddled with domesticity, weary and yet resigned to it. . . . What she wrote was a protest, but it was also a defense of her own code of existence."²² Writing that the "best flapper is reticent emotionally and courageous morally," Fitzgerald explained that flappers wanted to "crystallize their ambitious desires and give form to their code of living."²³ She asserted women's right to discover and pursue their own interests, "to do what is pleasant and what they please."²⁴ By following this "flapper creed," Fitzgerald argued, women could choose their stories: "they can come home and live happily ever afterwards--or go into the movies or become social service 'workers' or something."²⁵ That "or something" is important, for it establishes women's access to endings--even endings that Fitzgerald cannot imagine--

²²Milford 92.

²³Fitzgerald, "What Became of the Flappers?" McCall's October 1925; rpt. in The Collected Writings: Zelda Fitzgerald, ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli (London: Little, Brown, 1991) 398; "Eulogy on the Flapper" 392.

²⁴Fitzgerald, "Eulogy on the Flapper" 392.

²⁵Fitzgerald, "Eulogy on the Flapper" 392-93.

other than "liv[ing] happily ever afterwards" in a normative marriage story.

Even Fitzgerald's startling statement that she "believe[s] in the flapper as an artist in her particular field, the art of being--being young, being lovely, being an object" describes the flapper with a language of mastery and vocation--as an artist in her field--to grant women power over their lives, to frame them as agents if also objects.²⁶ Similarly, in defending young women's use of cosmetics, Fitzgerald points to "that thing for which paint and powder stands," an ability for women "to choose their destinies--to be successful competitors in the great game of life."²⁷ For Fitzgerald, the flagrant use of make-up signifies women's self-making. Asserting flappers' control over their bodies, desires, and destinies, Fitzgerald voiced a flapper's battle-cry of female empowerment and self-expression. In it, people heard the crumbling of the social order.

The flapper's "freedom" was primarily coded bodily through her deviation from traditional female forms defined

²⁶Fitzgerald, "What Became of the Flappers?" 398.

²⁷Zelda Fitzgerald, "Paint and Powder," The Smart Set, May 1929; rpt. in The Collected Writings: Zelda Fitzgerald, ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli (London: Little, Brown, 1991) 416. Bruccoli notes that the article, written in 1927, was published under F. Scott Fitzgerald's name but credited to Zelda Fitzgerald in her husband's Ledger.

by marriage, monogamy, and maternity. Writing for The Ladies' Home Journal in 1920, Rhoda Broughton compared old and new versions of femininity, fondly recalling "the decorous dances, the tulle and tarlatan dresses, with the 'cautious scoop' in front of their bodies, and the sufficient veiling everywhere." "[T]he decent mystery of yesterday," Broughton complains, is placed "against the brazen candor of to-day," yesterday's "modest maiden" replaced with "the rampant virgin of to-day, about whose heart and sentiments there is as little mystery as about her almost undraped body."²⁸ But Broughton's admiration of this new woman is also apparent:

Her gait is manly, her manners are brusque; . . . she is able to exercise all her faculties of both mind and body. Her existence is made up of vigorous pleasures that harden her muscles and supple her limbs, and of that hard study which braces the mind. (141)

Broughton's admiration as well as her critique focuses on the way that the flapper's "new" body--a body not softened and veiled by tulle and tarlatan but a hardened, active, exposed body--expands her mind and broadens her activities. Despite the pleasures and freedoms offered by such a body, however, the article judges that "the old ideal of husband and house must ultimately present itself as the best and

²⁸Rhoda Broughton, "Girls Past and Present," The Ladies' Home Journal September 1920: 38, 141.

most consonant with the laws of nature." Yet, Broughton admonishes, "Home means nothing to [the modern young woman] save as a prison from which to escape."²⁹

In fact, the flappers' rejection of hour-glass figures for a "boyish" look signified an attempt to evade narratives of domesticity, to disassociate themselves bodily from their corseted mothers and grandmothers. This move was often coded socially as an effort "to copy 'the freedom' of men."³⁰ The flapper's bobbed hair and drop-waisted slip dresses that refused to accentuate "feminine" curves struck some as indecently masculine.³¹ Some women donned men's-styled clothes to better suit their increasing activities, fueling speculation that flappers were out of control. Such thinking was strong in the South: Zelda Fitzgerald and her husband were initially denied accommodations at a good Virginia hotel because Zelda Fitzgerald entered the lobby in a touring outfit modeled

²⁹Broughton 141.

³⁰Robert Quillen, "Letters From a Bald-Headed Dad to a Flapper Daughter," The [Atlantal Constitution] 30 January 1932: 8.

³¹And, Rita Freedman notes in Beauty Bound (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1986), as indecently liberated: "women agonized over whether to bob, and husbands threatened to divorce them if they did" since "the flappers proclaimed their sexual freedom through short skirts and bobbed hair" (85, 27).

after her husband's knickerbockers and blazer.³² James Mellow recounts that the "farther south they went, the more they became aware of the problem of Zelda's costume. . . . At a garage in North Carolina, the mechanic glared at Fitzgerald and spoke consoling words to Zelda: 'It's a pity that a nice girl like you should be let to wear those clothes.'"³³ The flapper's famed freedom of movement--in her carriage and self-presentation as well as her automobile-driven mobility--daringly (and, for some, troublingly) diverged, at least in form, from the patriarchally restrained, home-bound, rounded female body of the previous generation.

Although the flapper's clothing suggested masculine freedom, the flapper's heavily painted face, especially her brilliant red mouth, connoted for her world a particularly feminine sensuality and sexual license coded as "low" and certainly out of line in middle- and upper-class "nice girl[s]." The flapper's actions reinforced such assumptions. Popular short skirts and rolled stockings showcased the flapper's legs from the knee down, and the frenetic movement of such bared legs in "wild" dances like

³²Milford 73.

³³James R. Mellow, Invented Lives: F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald (New York: Ballantine, 1984) 107.

the Charleston seemed to express an unleashed female sexuality threatening social stability.³⁴ The Ladies' Home Journal warned that "jazz dancing relaxes morality and undermines the institution of the family" and "is an element of tremendously evil potentiality."³⁵

In fact, nothing marked "the problem" of flappers as much as their dancing. To "traditionalists," it represented "rude passion, Negro lewdness, sensuous movement."³⁶ The flapper's corporeal presence and suggestion of accessible sexuality manifested in performance of popular twenties' dances, many of which did have African and black southern roots, attached traits stereotypically associated with black or low-class women in the South to privileged young white women.³⁷ The flapper's dancing body thus breached class and race divisions, effectively uprooting entrenched definitions

³⁴Banner's American Beauty details the association of the flapper with sensuality "through constant, vibrant movement" in popular dances (279).

³⁵John R. McMahon, "Unspeakable Jazz Must Go," The Ladies' Home Journal, December 1921: 38.

³⁶Fass 22.

³⁷See William J. Schafer, "Jazz," Encyclopedia of Southern Culture, eds. Charles Reagan Wilson and William Ferris (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1989) 1018; and André Levinson, "The Negro Dance: Under European Eyes," Theatre Arts Monthly (April 1927); rpt. in André Levinson on Dance: Writings from Paris in the Twenties, eds. Joan Acocella and Lynn Garatola (Hanover: Wesleyan UP, 1991) 69-75.

of southern womanhood's sexual and racial purity. The South's flowering belles, cherished for their collective purity and wholesomeness, shimmied provocatively and with abandon--and with their northern counterparts became the locus of debate.

Domesticating the Flapper

Editorials proposing solutions to the "flapper problem" were common throughout the decade. As early as 1922, Zelda Fitzgerald complains about the popular trend of blaming flappers for all sorts of perceived breakdowns in social order:

I came across an amazing editorial a short time ago. It fixed the blame for all divorces, crime waves, high prices, unjust taxes, violations of the Volstead Act and crimes in Hollywood upon the head of the Flapper. The paper wanted back the dear old fireside of long ago, wanted to resuscitate "Hearts and Flowers" and have it instituted as the sole tune played at dances from now on and forever, wanted prayers before breakfast on Sunday morning--and to bring things back to this superb state it advocated restraining the Flapper.³⁸

Of course, "restraining the Flapper" required the efforts of a variety of institutions--as indicated by Frank H. Gaines's response to The Literary Digest's request at the start of the decade for editors, educators, and clergymen to assess the implications of the flapper. Asked whether "the 'old-

³⁸Fitzgerald, "Eulogy on the Flapper" 392.

fashioned girl' with all that she stands for . . . [is] in danger of becoming extinct," Gaines, president of Agnes Scott College (an Atlanta women's school), claimed that "the home, the press, the church, and the college could do much toward creating a healthy public sentiment which would counteract the evils of which you speak."³⁹ Gerald Critoph notes that Gaines's recommendation sums up the thrust of responses to the journal's query and thus reflects institutional proclivities to enact a "healthy" crack-down on the modern young woman's personal liberties.

What was coded as "evil" was the passing of the old way of life; the daughters of college presidents and magazine editors, flappers themselves were more commonly represented as misguided and in need of supervision than as evil. Indeed, popular media increasingly depicted the flappers' rejection of traditional norms of feminine behavior as innocent foolhardiness. By the middle of the decade, rather than being framed as seductresses or vamps, flappers were most often sketched as wholesome, natural girls who presented themselves in a provocative manner because they were naively faddish or innocently unaware of their own "healthy" sexual presence. Editorials warned that flappers little understood the danger that their movements could

³⁹Qtd. in Critoph 149-50.

invite or the social devastation that could result from their individual actions. Society thus granted young southern white women some expression of sexuality, but they were understood as lacking control over or even awareness of their sexuality. Authorities across the South proposed that flapping daughters be saved from their own natural but potentially self-destructive femininity and (re)inserted safely into the old order where they would inevitably find fulfillment.

In his regular column in The [Atlanta] Constitution, Robert Quillen illustrates the desire to rein in young southern women. His open letter to "a Flapper Daughter" warns, "The easiest way to avoid trouble is to be prepared for it, and for that reason I want you to understand the pitfalls and dangers prepared for you by your well-meaning sisters of other days." He complains that women's drive for emancipation did not "end" with "the right to vote" as it should have; instead, young women are simply intoxicated by the "heady wine" of "new-found freedom," like "colt[s]" who have "kick[ed] free of [the] harness" and are "run[nin]g away" and "running amuck." But, Quillen assures his daughter Louise, the "feminine folly" caused by a "new-found freedom that shortened skirts, discarded undergarments, cultivated the tobacco habit, learned to drink liquor, and

made sex a topic of conversation in polite society" is only "a temporary condition. . . . Only the normal can endure." His daughter must "[w]atch [her] step," for she will be shunned once people "return to the old standards of decency."⁴⁰

The most effective defusing of the flapper's threat came with the popular imagination's reframing of the flapper as a "normal" girl. That is, the flapper's exaggerated performance of something other than traditional femininity was thought merely to cloak her basic traditional "real" femininity--she had never really abandoned those "old standards of decency." Thus, social discourse neutralized the disruptive flapper by "unmasking" her as a "natural" woman, aimed for marriage and maternity. One college man articulated a popular sentiment that the flapperesque "girls at [his] school are wholesome and sensible, for beneath the veneer of modern dress, cosmetics, dancing, and such, is found a woman who is as conscious of the real values of life as her mother."⁴¹ The flapper may have looked dangerous, sexually and socially frightening, but really she was just the girl next door playing fashionable masquerade, willing

⁴⁰Quillen 8.

⁴¹Ohio State Lantern (11 January 1922) 1; qtd. in Fass 308, emphasis hers.

to put her play aside for the duties of marriage and motherhood.

Perhaps the most popular flapper film, Our Dancing Daughters (1928), plays out exactly this scenario. Billed as "a white-hot story of gin, jazz, and naughtiness among the debutantes" and "a story of the love of a modern girl,"⁴² the film secures the primacy of the patriarchal family by exposing the flapper's actions as misdirected and misconceived. The plot pivots upon a male character's faulty impression of Diana Medford, the lead flapper, played by Joan Crawford. Although the wealthy man admires Diana, her uninhibited actions signified primarily in dance scenes--being "too free in public"--make him question whether she could make a fit wife, and he marries another. Despite her dancing and smoking, "Diana the Dangerous" proves more wholesome than the woman the suitor marries; Diana's "badness" and the wife's "goodness" are revealed as masquerades. By film's end, the now-widowed millionaire recognizes Diana's inherent virtue and resolves to marry her, a determination that reforms Diana's flapperesque ways. (Our Dancing Daughters is followed by Crawford's 1930 film, Our Blushing Brides.) The very rigor of efforts to recast the flapper's actions as temporary innocent

⁴²Higashi 127.

high-spiritedness (that is, as "belle-like")--and not unnatural, calculated, or unwomanly--indicates the seriousness of the flapper's assault on cultural imperatives as much as the tenacity of old standards.

Although not southern, films such as Our Dancing Daughters and the earlier Dancing Mothers (1926) codified the idea across the nation that the flapper, particularly the dancing flapper, signaled women's liberation from their previous incarnations as chaste virgin and dutiful mother. But if the woman's participation in jazz-style dancing seemingly gauged the degree of her deviation from conventional roles in these movies, many popular films' resolutions, as in Diana's case, negated the extent of meaningful change in female identities or lives. Diana's dancing days are clearly over; she has learned the error of her flapper ways and happily relinquishes such flap-doodle for her man. Film historians note the conservative tendencies of the flapper films of the twenties, in which heroines are consistently "reformed" from their wild ways into traditional women.⁴³

⁴³See Higashi 129-31; and Patricia Erens, "The Flapper: Hollywood's First Liberated Woman," Dancing Fools and Weary Blues: The Great Escape of the Twenties, eds. Lawrence R. Broer and John D. Walther (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State UP, 1990) 130-139.

Initially, Dancing Mothers might seem an aberration to this pattern: in it, a traditional woman rebels. When Ethel Wescourt (played by Alice Joyce), a beautiful and devotedly domestic mother, tires of her isolation from her husband and daughter, both of whom are spending their nights at fashionable clubs, she decides to go out on the town herself. Her married life is further disrupted in the jazz club when she discovers her husband's philandering and she herself attracts the amorous attention of the man whom her flapper daughter, played by Clara Bow, is pursuing. Despite his advances, Ethel does not have an affair with this playboy, nor does she reconcile with her husband; instead she abandons her daughter and husband, suddenly confident in her ability to lead an independent and fulfilling life. Dancing Mothers illustrates the extent to which jazz dancing and the liberation it signifies disrupts conventional familial order--even for women who are not themselves flappers.

Although Dancing Mothers is unusual in its refusal to condemn Ethel's actions, the film nevertheless clarifies that dancing mothers do not serve the best interests of traditional families. In fact, the film's ending was so controversial that it was replaced with a second alternative ending of familial reconciliation for "regular audiences

outside of the bigger towns."⁴⁴ The production and distribution of such an ending points to the resistance (or at least the expectation of resistance) to such shows of female liberation and a privileging of the marital and maternal relationships over the development of a woman's independent identity. If small-town audiences--surely, many of them southern--were unaware of its earlier ending, the film would only reinforce conventional expectations that a woman sacrifice her desire and autonomy for others--a story that would sell.

Flapper films reflect the slant of larger cultural debates that framed domesticity as a way of ultimately containing flapper disruption. The endings of Our Dancing Daughters and the second Dancing Mothers carefully attempt to soften the extent of flapper behavior, suggesting that

⁴⁴Higashi 162. Higashi reports that one film reviewer referred to this second ending as an "alternate happy ending" and notes:

Such an ending is a typical studio maneuver to hedge bets and to blur and make meaningless the controversial issues raised by the film. Unfortunately, there is no material available that would indicate to what extent the alternative ending was used and in what locales. The reviewer's distinction between urban and non-urban audiences, however, points to a social consciousness about geographical differences in values and lifestyles. But the description of the alternate ending as the "happy" one implies a complete lack of appreciation of Ethel's dilemma as a woman. (162)

women's "liberated" actions do not fundamentally challenge conventional womanhood--and the social institutions it buttresses. Although Dancing Mothers and Our Dancing Daughters depict flapperesque dancing as markers of women's deviation from conventional domesticity, the lead characters' digressions are only temporary; neither film sustains the woman's rejection of normative femininity or domesticity.

It is hardly surprising that two competing southern accounts of flappers would focus on dancing and marriage to appraise the flapper's impact on the standards of ladyhood. In Corra Harris's Flapper Anne, first serialized in The Ladies' Home Journal at the close of 1925, and Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald's Save Me the Waltz, a novel based on her own life and published in 1932, depictions of dance function as a way of working through the idea of female liberation and self--before and, significantly in Fitzgerald's work, after marriage. Initially signifying the young women's deviation from conventional southern standards of womanhood, the varieties of dance performed in the novels--from popular jazz dancing to aesthetic dance and classical ballet--negotiate the place of the white, privileged female body in society and ultimately point to the limitations of female self-expression. In Harris's work, these limitations are

presented as "proper," and any possibilities opened up by dance shut down under the pressures of domesticity. Part of a concerted effort to fortify traditional southern values, Harris's Flapper Anne thus places a dutiful and innocuous flapper back in the home and under the rule of a guiding patriarchal authority. Fitzgerald's Save Me the Waltz, on the other hand, resurrects the flapper ideal to choreograph a new kind of married woman embodying a challenge to her Alabama upbringing and popular narratives of domesticity.

Corra Harris's (Dis)Embodied Daughter

"she glided into the room dancing like a moonbeam,
so much fairer and whiter. . . ." ⁴⁵

Although she is seldom read today, Corra Harris was serialized frequently in the Saturday Evening Post, The Ladies' Home Journal, Good Housekeeping, and Pictorial Review, and she wrote about southern concerns prolifically for periodicals as varied as Harper's, The Independent, The American and Uncle Remus Magazine. Harris earned a loyal and diverse following, admired by literary critics as a realist in the vein of Ellen Glasgow and Sinclair Lewis and praised by a devoted female readership for her fiction's "wholesome" and "decent" outlook--an outlook epitomized by such novels as her well-received A Circuit Rider's Wife

⁴⁵Harris, Flapper Anne 203.

(1910).⁴⁶ Though many of her works satirize a parochial South caught up in its own mythmaking, to label Harris a social rebel like Frances Newman would be a mistake, for Harris at her most hard-edged would "violat[e] the tradition of what a Southern woman ought to be, what she ought to think, and how she ought to write" only to reimpose a rigid moral order that encompassed restrictive and old-fashioned gender roles.⁴⁷ Harris used her position as a writer to urge women toward domesticity: in a speech at a girls' school, Harris advised,

If you are a young woman and labor under the purely romantic illusion that you have a literary talent . . . [and] you have a choice between becoming an author, and the mother, home and heaven career, do not choose the literary career. It is far more exacting and its greatest rewards are not commensurate with the peace and salvation that comes from achieving a warm, sun and candlelit home life for others.⁴⁸

Preferring that literary work recognize the worthiness of many southern codes and be morally and socially uplifting,

⁴⁶John E. Talmadge, Corra Harris: Lady of Purpose (Athens: UGA Press, 1968) 112.

⁴⁷Edwin Mims, The Advancing South (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page, 1926) 204. Also see Wayne Mixon, "Humor, Romance, and Realism at the Turn of the Century," The History of Southern Literature, eds. Louis D. Rubin, Jr., et al., (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1985) 250-51.

⁴⁸"Corra Harris in Brilliant Speech Gives Girls Advice," The Atlanta Constitution 23 Jan. 1927, Sunday morning ed.: A9-10. The article reprints Harris's speech in its entirety.

Harris despised any writing that she felt was unloyal to the South or focused only on the "evil and scandalous"--thus she abhorred Erskine Caldwell's and William Faulkner's works along with Frances Newman's.⁴⁹ Indeed, despite its often liberal tone, Flapper Anne ultimately illustrates its author's conservative politics and desire for patriarchal order.

Flapper Anne details twenty-year-old Anne Capers' arrival in the small Georgia town of her father's birth, where she must live with her grandmother for a year in order to inherit the remainder of her deceased father's fortune. (Anne's mother, a professional dancer, abandoned her family shortly after the birth of her daughter.) Flapper Anne's spirited antics both charm and scandalize the town, earning her several male admirers. But Anne refuses to settle down to what she deems would be a boring married existence--the staid life represented by her good grandmother--and instead determines to go through life having fun and breaking engagements with suitable young men. However, Anne falls desperately in love with a brooding young doctor who, appearing to hate all women and Anne particularly, brutally chastises her (while he is dressed in the "ancient" armor of a "marauding knight" and she as the Prince of Wales) for her

⁴⁹Talmadge 144.

unfeminine ways (246-7). The smitten Anne reforms, the two intended lovers are thrown together to confess their feelings, and the novel closes with Anne's and the young Dr. Abel Fossdick's determination to marry.⁵⁰

Corra Harris's novel follows the trend of popular flapper films that worked to limit or defuse the disruptiveness of the flapper while titillating audiences with the figure's sex-appeal. "My merit will be," Harris's narrator writes,

to have furnished many a mother with the highly exciting motion picture of her own daughter's real life. Why should these innocent, simple, elder women be deprived of the screen version, of the thrills and hair-breadth escapes which their daughters so frequently make from death, shame, and dishonor? (5)

Such framing reinforces old-fashioned maternal womanhood even as it legitimates the flapper's exciting career, so initially, both the mothers' and the flapper daughters' positions are seemingly acceptable--an unusual stance in The Ladies' Home Journal. The first-person narrator is unwilling to condemn even if she cannot quite bring herself to endorse her protagonist's exploits: "I am not condemning her, you understand, I am simply using the standard

⁵⁰During Harris's time, a Reverend Fossdick was a popular circuit minister. I think Fossdick's name would position the character for Harris's readers as a moral authority as well as masculine force.

dictionary terms to indicate the nature of her performances," she insists (12).

Corra Harris's initial tone of tolerance verging on admiration for the flapper's adventures establishes the narrator as an objective judge of various modes of femininity, both old and new. That she is not openly hostile to the flapper makes her ideological work all the more powerful. As the novel proceeds, its tone becomes increasingly critical of the flapper. The following passage typifies one of the frequent narratorial interruptions reminding readers of the misdirection of flappers like Anne, who for all their seeming misbehavior are "really" good girls who will turn into good mothers:

I have . . . [a] notion about these poor young flappers. They are beating on the table and dancing in the dinner plates trying to raise a thirst for adventure. Nothing will come of it but a generation of prudish, suspicious mothers with embarrassing memories of their own youth which will have been forgotten by everybody else before their own daughters grow up. I have no idea there will remain one person who would dare tell Anne's sons and daughters twenty years hence the pace she set for her followers in Milledge that winter, because by that time Anne will herself have become such an honorable contradiction of such scandals. (186-87)

At the novel's start, however, dancing is clearly a threat to domestic order because it signifies women's freedom, especially their liberation from conventional female roles of marriage and motherhood. Anne's paternal

grandmother recalls Anne's mother as "that dancing girl, whose grace and beauty had charmed New York for a season, who had married [Mrs. Capers'] son, becoming so casually the mother of his child, as if this was only another season's contract, and passed on her way out of sight never to be mentioned again" (34). Because Anne's parents divorce when her mother's "art" and ambition draw her back to the stage, Anne never knows her mother (22). Even before she could have seen Dancing Mothers, Harris shows that dancing mothers do not support familial interests.

So Anne's dancing mother, mentioned by name--Emma Abbott--only once, never participates in the novel's action, and "nobody knows" "what became of her" (22). But she functions as a ghost, a threat from Anne's background--the mysterious tainted woman from whom Anne might have inherited "exotic" tendencies. "Emma Abbott" hardly sounds like a enigmatic or foreign identity, but her choice to dance rather than to mother enshrouds her in Milledge as alien and horridly fascinating. Anne is thought to have "managed . . . exquisite heathen effects with her occidental features and coloring," probably a result of the blood of

her mother, that dancing girl who had appeared from nowhere and disappeared in the same general direction. The story went that she was a common Gypsy girl who had danced her way up through the East Side cabarets to Broadway, and after Capers divorced her she had danced her way down and out

by the same route. But there were those who declared that she was a Russian woman, the fantastic herald of all the dancers who had come after her from the same dark rim of the world.
(63)

Nonjudgmentally, Anne believes that her mother felt unfit to be the traditional wife and mother that Anne's father wanted and that she returned to her stage career as an alternative.

Anne's own dancing is carefully presented as freedom that suggests but never approaches the independence of her mother's career as a professional theatrical dancer. (Of course, her mother's independence is imposed rather than permitted because there is never any question of Anne's mother having both career and family.) At one point, the flapper provocatively claims to have considered dancing professionally, but her decision to marry at the end of the novel clearly forecloses any such possibility. Nonetheless, Anne's dancing throughout the novel always falls under the shadow of her dancing mother's impropriety and thus reinforces the textual questioning of Anne's "true" character and the extent of her divergence from the normative.

In good flapper form, Anne cultivates a racy variation of her set's jazzing at roadhouses and the University Club. Anne's "dinner plate dance" at Roads End Mill is described as particularly sensational:

Suddenly Anne Capers swung from Charlie Nichols's tightening embrace, leaped as lightly upon the table as a bird flutters itself onto a higher twig, placed the toe of one vivid red slipper in a plate and whirled like a flame. There was a wild burst of applause, shrieks of laughter and admiration as she skipped from plate to plate and spun herself like a top on the toe of first one foot, then the other. Glasses tinkled and spoons rattled pewterly but not one plate was out of line when she flew down again into Nichols's arms to finish the dance.

'You inherited your toes, my dear!' he whispered with accusative admiration. (184)

Clearly this plate dance, which fuels rumors about Anne's depraved character in the shocked town, frames Anne's wildness and suggests a licentiousness--she's wearing "vivid red"--that Charlie Nichols underscores when he declares her tabletop dance proof that Anne does not spring from a family of "hymn-singers." In fact, the association here of Anne's jazz dancing with her "dark" maternal heritage (her shady dancing mother comes from some "dark rim of the world" and has a baby/sex "so casually") perhaps implies Anne's identification with black codes perceived as sexualized, and thus further colors Anne's character. Or if the passage "accus[es]" Anne of unrestrained sexuality, it also illustrates Anne's singular control over her own body: that Anne's dance occurs just as her partner's embrace "tightens" suggests Anne's desire and ability to escape a man's hold over her.

Just as "the swiftness of her operations" is almost always asserted rather than illustrated, such dancing on the tabletops is seldom described, perhaps precisely because it evokes the taint of Anne's mother's abandon, and Harris takes pains to recast the flapper as a "good" girl who is merely misdirected (12). Though the novel insists that almost every youthful entertainment is followed by this kind of frenetic dancing that "often lasted into the early morning hours" (188), another kind of dance receives greater attention in the narrative. "Aesthetic dance"--the solo performance of interpretive movement by a dramatically costumed Anne--becomes most linked to Anne's portrayal.

Initially, the text does not seem to draw much distinction between the two kinds of dancing. Anne's aesthetic dancing is introduced as yet another shocking exposure of the flapper's body. Mrs. Capers learns of her granddaughter's artistic dancing when she objects that Anne's outfits make her "plainly visible!" (77). "Visible?" responds Anne, "Yes, I know what you mean. . . . You should see me doing an aesthetic dance in zero weather" (77). She then excitedly shows Mrs. Capers the costume for her "moon dance":

Mrs. Capers stared, mystified. There was no skirt, no legs to the thing. So far as she could see it was not made, not even hemmed anywhere, the edges ending in the raveled fringe of the goods.

The sides were wide open like long wings, ready to spread and part with the slightest motion. The whole thing was draped over short, flesh-colored silk trunks, very brief. (78)

Mrs. Capers associates aesthetic dancing only with "small girls who performed like sweet little dying angels before every audience assembled for any kind of children's entertainment" and cannot reconcile Anne's seemingly indecent exposure to such innocence (79). But, paradoxically, the apparent "bodilessness" of the garment--it is "a glistening cloud of soft white stuff" with no skirt, no legs, but "wings" (77, 78)--foreshadows that Anne's aesthetic dance will mark her transformation from an embodied and willful flapper into a state of angelic, transcendent (dead) womanhood.

The style of dance that Anne labels "aesthetic" was popularized by Isadora Duncan in the early part of the twentieth century. Duncan's interpretive dance arose out of a tradition of Delsartean performance fashionable in the closing decades of the nineteenth century that included statue posing, pantomimes, and dance in a highly choreographed series of actions or poses, *tableaux movants* and *tableaux vivants*.⁵¹ Participants were privileged girls

⁵¹For information on François Delsarte and Duncan's link to Delsartean expression, see John Martin, America Dancing (New York: Dodge, 1936) 95-97, 145; Patricia Mellencamp, A Fine Romance: Five Ages of Film Feminism

and young women, clothed in Grecian-style robes, posing at society functions, their movements gracefully expressive though untrained. Duncan's dance form picked up on the classical themes, expressive gestures, and accessibility of Delsartean performance, but Duncan also naturalized the body's movement and articulated a philosophy of artistic motion.⁵² Duncan believed that through dance, "the body becomes transparent and is a medium for the mind and spirit."⁵³ She envisioned an American dance that would "be clean," that "would have nothing to do with the sensual lilt of the jazz rhythm" nor "any vestige of the Fox Trot or the Charleston" but would be "like the vibration of the American soul striving upward."⁵⁴

Thus, despite sensualized performances on stage--she frequently performed in sheer tunics that revealed her nude figure--Duncan distinguished her style from chorus and jazz

(Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1995) 220-22; and Nancy Lee Chalfa Ruyter "Antique Longings: Genevieve Stebbins and American Delsartean Performance," in Corporealities: Dancing Knowledge, Culture, and Power, ed. Susan Leigh Foster (London: Routledge, 1996) 70-89.

⁵²See Lincoln Kirstein, The Book of the Dance (Garden City, NY: Garden City Publishing, 1935) 264-73, and Amy Koritz Gendering Bodies / Performing Art (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1995) especially 45-55 and 59-73.

⁵³Qtd. in Kirstein 271.

⁵⁴Isadora Duncan, My Life (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1927) 342, 340.

dancing, disdaining the "tottering, ape-like convulsions of the Charleston" and "the sensual convulsion of the Negro."⁵⁵ She insisted that her bodily display was high "art": "When I dance, my object is to inspire reverence, not to suggest anything vulgar. I do not appeal to the lower instincts of mankind as your half-clad chorus girls do."⁵⁶ Reviewers agreed, identifying Duncan's art as "closely modelled on the best Greek sculpture" and thus "classical--that is, more pure, more cold, as we say, more chaste, and therefore more enduring" than that previously performed on stage.⁵⁷ For Duncan as for the southern lady, female corporeality is subsumed by a racist ideology of white women's natural spirituality and moral transcendence. In such thinking, "the body becomes a problem to be overcome," a materiality to be shed or at least forgotten.⁵⁸

True to Duncan's aspirations, Anne Caper's aesthetic dancing functions to redeem her from her vulgar participation in jazz dancing and to enable her to reform her body. Rather than present a female body in suggestive

⁵⁵Duncan, My Life 341-42.

⁵⁶Isadora Duncan, Isadora Speaks, ed. Franklin Rosemont, (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1981) 48.

⁵⁷"Isadora Duncan," Academy (11 July 1908) 43; qtd. in Koritz 46.

⁵⁸Koritz 70.

movement, Anne's oddly static aesthetic dancing reshapes Anne's body as marble-limbed and evaporative, suggesting both classical Greek sculpture and a transcendence of the corporeal. In fact, the most extended description of Anne's body in dance is actually a description of photographs taken of her dancing. Pat O'Keefe, the local newspaper reporter, studies the stills:

'Gad!' he exclaimed, staring at the first one--Anne doing her moonlight dance, her draperies flying, her head thrown back, white limbs glistening, arms lifted, incomparable beauty and grace. The next one, Anne again, doing a toe dance, like a stiff white lily in a whirlwind. In the next one she was doing her storm dance in a black cloud of swirling draperies through which she gleamed and twinkled like moonlight streaming through hurrying clouds. (145)

In the photographs Anne's body seems comfortably removed to an immobile state: she is white-limbed statue, "a stiff white lily," a moonbeam at the center of but untouched by the "black" movement around her. The only sense of her bodily control is her obduracy--at the center of things, she is unyielding. The emphasis on Anne's whiteness, which appears in all the descriptions of her interpretive performances, suggests Harris's effort to distance Anne from flapper dance, which is clouded with the sexualized corporeality ascribed to blacks, as well as from her "dark" maternal heritage. The flapping draperies in the passage are all that are left to suggest the flapper with "legs in . . . a

state of riotous activity" (174). Anne herself has seemingly transcended corporeality to become some elemental icon of "beauty and grace"--a lady on a pedestal, perhaps.

A crucial scene marks the divergence between Anne's two styles of dance and clarifies Anne's "true" nature. The night of the Christmas masquerade dance that Anne throws, no one can discover which reveler is Anne Capers, though all expect her to arrive as a "dancing girl" in some provocative costume. What has been foreshadowed for readers is that Anne's most audacious costume for masquerades--the one that "go[es] the limit" (82)--is a suit of polo clothes stolen from the actual Prince of Wales, so when just that personage gallops in on horseback and fakes a dramatic fall in front of the steps leading into the house, readers are in on the joke. The only others to recognize Anne in the costume are a distressed Grandmother Capers, who had "stared at [the] garments as if they had been a presentiment of unimaginable disaster" when she first discovered the men's clothes in Anne's wardrobe (79); two of Anne's most devoted admirers; and Abel Fossdick, who crashes the party as a marauding knight in armor. The Prince spends the night chatting and dancing with the less popular girls and Mrs. Capers while the partygoers search in vain to discover Anne. The flapper apparently makes an admirable, completely convincing man.

Eventually prompting Fossdick's condemnation of Anne, Anne's cross-dressing is the final measure of Anne's defiance of convention and Harris's swipe at the "masculine" vestments and actions of flappers. Women should not step out of place, seemingly, even in masquerade. Fossdick's costume, on the other hand, hardly seems a masquerade in the novel's terms, for the armor accurately reflects his manly forcefulness: another man, surprised at the knight's sudden appearance, recognizes, "'By gosh! some man inside! Who is there in all this brave city that can put on a shirt and pants weighing nearly two hundred pounds and still use his legs?'" (199). Noticing the entry of this uninvited masquerader a few minutes before midnight, Prince Anne stepped "across the threshold of the library to make sure whether this was a man or a suit of ancient armor," and she recalls her

amazement when with one swift swing of his mailed arm the man inside the thing slammed the door and caught her to his breast. She recalled her sensations--breathless terror, as those women must have felt ages ago when they were seized and carried off by a marauding knight.--The coldness of this breast, the angry strength of this encircling arm, as if he were tempted to crush her in this rage. She was conscious that moment of only one sensation, his anger, as if he had some secret right to be angry with her, and that instant when he had raised his visor, his face, undistinguishable in this shadow. She felt his stare, knew he had bent to kiss or curse her, then drew back in a blaze of passion--. . . He had called her some name, not 'hellion,' but meaning

the same thing.--Was it 'jade'?--she had been too astonished at the swiftness of the whole encounter to remember. 'Try to do something becoming to a woman a man can love!' he hissed, and flung her from him. --She had caught at something, probably a chair, to keep from falling, cast him one terrified glance and fled through the door into the hall upstairs, frightened out of her wits.

She remembered beginning to tear off her Prince of Wales costume as she sped toward her room, not that she was ashamed of it, but she needed another one more verifying to herself under these circumstances. (246-47)

Anne is vanquished, needing to strip herself of her masculine and false attire, "hypnotized into some kind of meekness by the outrageous authority of his presence" (249). Like "[e]very woman," the novel insists, Anne "would sell out only to the man who could overcome her . . . [for women] crave the privilege of being married to a superior being" (241). Anne must prove herself feminine to the phallic Fossdick (and therefore herself), and she tries to at the very moment--midnight--that all the guests unmask.

But the knight in shining armor has vanished along with the Prince of Wales (suggesting that Fossdick could not possibly "unmask" to any more fundamental identity) and so misses the revelation of Anne's "true" identity--Anne in her wispy "moonbeam dancing costume" which accentuated "her only assets now, a woman's grace and beauty":

she glided into the room dancing like a moonbeam, so much fairer and whiter in the midst of all this color. Her black head gleamed, her draperies floated, her toes twinkled. If her pallor was

noticeable this was accepted as the normal complexion of a moonlight dancer. (202)

This is the dance that "verifies" her, signifying her traditional femininity. She is a fair, white moonbeam floating among revelers; her "pallor" only heightens her ethereality. Anne grieves that Fossdick does not witness the revelation of her true spirit; she had run from him to change into her dance costume, thinking "only of flying back downstairs, praying that he still might be there to see her grace and beauty. . . . What keen disappointment to discover that he was no longer present" (247). After this climactic party, the flapper remains "unmasked." Anne loses pleasure in "the thrills of an adventure" (212), starts to "conduct . . . herself as one determined to be above reproach" (225), and begins to decline invitations, "experienc[ing] a strange revulsion to the social enterprises" of her friends (242). She refuses to go dancing. Mending her flapper ways, transcending the flapper's body, Anne eventually gains Fossdick's regard.

So the heroine meets her match, and by novel's end, her impending marriage to Fossdick "save[s Anne] from being a bad [girl] by the skin of her teeth" (270). Anne Capers confesses her pleasure over her engagement to her grandmother: "I'm so happy--and changed. Now I shall be like you when I'm old. I feel it, Grandmother, that now I

shall grow to be gentle and good like you, sweet, you know" (270, 268). Her grandmother, "a little old doll of a lady" who "had given up dancing many years ago" represents the "goodness" that the reformed Anne now claims (12, 196). Her grandmother's face displays the "beautiful innocence" of a child, her eyes

round, wide open, revealing herself to you, with nothing to reveal. She . . . had a sort of lifted angle of vision, not on account of her diminutive stature, but because it was her habit to regard men and circumstances with this skyward gaze, contracted through the meekness of her mind. (12, 14-15, emphasis mine)

"She belonged to history, poetry, and traditions," the "sweetly past tense of a woman kept by her memories and traditions" in a "state of invincible ignorance" (15, 106). But the "meekness of [Mrs. Capers'] mind" and her "invincible ignorance" are not narratorial critiques--indeed, these are the grandmother's strengths and triumphs. All along, Harris's narrator assures us, the flapper was "self-decei[ved]"--perhaps because she initially acted as though she has a "self," unlike grandmother Capers whose selflessness is evidenced by the correspondence between the revelation of "herself" and having "nothing to reveal."

The flapper has come full circle. That she, who determinedly vowed to be "deliver[ed] . . . from a tepid old

age" and who dismissed her grandmother as a "soft little remnant of a lady" "faded . . . [to the] hues of former human coloring" (84), now longs to inhabit her grandmother's (not her liberated mother's) domestic as well as personal and social place, is a great triumph for the old order, for it "corrects" the social gains of the flappers' mothers. Anne's "self" is commissioned to the only man who can properly master her, and the narrator concludes that for her part, she

shall always contend that it was the man [Anne] married who changed her and brought her up to the standard. It all depends upon the kind of man a flapper marries what becomes of her, or of that marriage. I suppose this is the reason why so many of them marry out of their class. They seek blindly what they need, some other kind. (268)

The "other kind," in this case, seems only to be a man of the old order, violently asserting his will to bring flawed womanhood, evidenced in even the best flapper, "up to the standard." When Anne implies the limitations of such a standard, laughing that Fossdick "probably would not have noticed [her] at all if [she] had behaved like a nice girl!" he admits this--"But don't do it again," he warned," to which she replies without a trace of irony, "'Oh never!'" (262). To be visible is fine, Harris's novel shows, so long as the flapper's motive is to gain the attention of a suitably marriageable man and then return to standard

"feminine" behavior in the framework of marriage. She is misdirected, however, if she wants to further her own ambitions or desires outside of marriage or remain beyond the reach of a controlling man.

Anne seals her promise to behave by recounting the narrative of their love: "'you came like a knight of old in armor to abuse me because you loved me'" (262). Harris's Flapper Anne thus reinstitutes the chivalric romance with one particularly cynical turn: rather than the noble traits of womanhood reforming men and society, natural manhood must now reform the errant women produced by suffrage and prohibition. Harris wants readers to understand that the "recent idea of equal rights, privileges, and liberties claimed by the women who have produced these flapper daughters . . . leads to damnable consequences in real life" (222-23). The happy ending that Harris imagines is achieved by contracting the flapper into a marital union in which abuse signifies love (262). The ending thus wrests the flapper's control over herself from her and gives it to another, stemming the circulation of her body and limiting the expansion of her mind, all in the context of appropriate "love."

Zelda Fitzgerald: Fleshing Out Another Story

Because her body is both written on by her culture and interpreted by it, Zelda's body is analogous to her own writing: out of both she has tried to create an alternative 'self,' separate from Scott and not subjected to the discourses of femininity.⁵⁹

"Zelda dancing and sweating."⁶⁰

In 1932, while hospitalized after a nervous breakdown, Zelda Fitzgerald wrote and published a novel based on her own life. A furious Scott Fitzgerald accused his wife of stealing his material and claimed their lives as his sole artistic property.⁶¹ Indeed, for years Zelda Fitzgerald's novel was read only as a companion piece to her husband's Tender is the Night, of interest because it provided a window on Scott Fitzgerald's life and material. But readers who turn to Save Me the Waltz as that book by Scott Fitzgerald's crazy wife ironically lock Zelda Fitzgerald's writing (and meaning) into a confining love-and-marriage story that the novel works to revise.

⁵⁹Michelle Payne, "5'4" x 2": Zelda Fitzgerald, Anorexia Nervosa, and Save Me the Waltz," Having Our Way: Women Rewriting Tradition in Twentieth-Century America, ed. Harriet Pollack (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell UP, 1995) 47.

⁶⁰F. Scott Fitzgerald, September 1929 entry in his ledger; The Ledger: A Facsimile, ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli (Washington: NCR/Microcard, 1972) 183.

⁶¹See Milford 273-74.

Divided into four parts, Save Me the Waltz follows the course of a flapper's life starting from girlhood in the South. Fitzgerald's flapper marries a painter and travels through Europe, trains for the ballet and launches a professional dance career, and finally returns with her husband and daughter to her birthplace following her father's death. Throughout this "jazz Bildungsroman," as Mary Gordon identifies the novel, Fitzgerald's flapper protagonist, Alabama Beggs, struggles to find "an interpretation of herself" (11).⁶² If Corra Harris's Flapper Anne presented marriage as the tidy resolution of a woman's identity and story, insisting that "every tale ends when it comes to telling how they lived 'happy ever after'" (262), Save Me the Waltz illustrates that after the nuptials women's lives continue for better or worse, and that domesticity may yield constrictive identities. In her third year of marriage, Alabama tells herself that she and her husband, David Knight, "were happy--she had inherited that from her mother. 'We are very happy,' she said to herself, as her mother would have said, 'but we don't seem to care very much whether we are or not'" (60). Alabama presumes that marriage ought to ensure her happiness and self-

⁶²Mary Gordon, "Introduction," The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald, ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli (London: Little, Brown, 1991) xxi.

fulfillment, the fiction inherited from her mother, but instead of fulfillment in her role as wife to a prominent artist and mother to a young daughter, Alabama finds a deadening emptiness. "[F]eeling [her life's] pulse like the throbbing of an amputated leg," Alabama searches for self-expression that she finds in dance (112). As her metaphor might suggest, her quest involves repossessing her own increasingly "cut-off" body.

A pointed deconstruction of the fairy tale romance motivating popular stories of women's lives, the initial situation and setting of Save Me the Waltz is similar to that of Flapper Anne. The youthful Alabama Beggs flouts the established mores of her "stronghold" father and self-abnegating mother in the small southern town of Montgomery, Alabama, but her marriage, like Anne Capers's engagement, inserts her into the very narrative of patriarchal domesticity that she longed to escape (9). Watching her older sister choose a conventional marriage for security, young Alabama witnesses her "sister change into a more fluctuating, more ingratiating person" (25). Alabama aligns her sister's response to her fiancé with the girls' response to their father: "It was nearly the same; the necessity of being something that you really weren't was the same" (25). Alabama soon determines to avoid such "self"-repression in

her own life. She "planned to escape . . . from the sense of suffocation that seemed to be eclipsing her family, her sisters, and mother" (32). By the time she is seventeen, she is a scandalous "speed" accused of "corrupting others" (34). She drinks and smokes, dances provocatively, plasters her face with make-up, does not intend to marry any of the many men she kisses (and, in fact, goes out with married men), and openly defies parental authority, quarreling with her father about her activities.

A "philosophical gourmand of possibilities," she feels stifled by the pace of Montgomery life, of "having dates and watching things rot" (30, 34):

[She sensed] her life's slipping by while June bugs covered the moist fruit in the fig trees with the motionless activity of clustering flies upon an open sore. The bareness of the dry Bermuda grass about the pecan trees crawled imperceptibly with tawny caterpillars. The matlike vines dried in the autumn heat and hung like empty locust shells from the burned thickets about the pillars of the house. The sun sagged yellow over the grass plots and bruised itself on the clotted cotton fields. (34)

The southern land "spread flat from the roads and lay prone in ribbed fans of broken discouragement," an "invertebrate world" (34, 35). The landscape is a stagnating body, mirroring the conventional feminine world against which Alabama rebels---a femininity that is prone, broken,

lifeless but enduring.⁶³ The oppressive feminine atmosphere of Montgomery is heightened by the restrictions imposed by her father, a judge, "a retributory organ, an inexorable fate, the force of law, order, and established discipline" (11). In fact, Alabama holds her father responsible for making the world what it was: she "had not thought of life as furnishing up the slow uneventful sequence, but of the Judge as meting it out that way" (87).

Not surprisingly, Alabama falls in love with a northern artist most unlike the boys with whom she had grown up, a man of whom her parents do not approve, a man who can take her away from home. The narrator explains, "[H]er marriage . . . precluded the Judge's resented direction" (51). Unlike Anne Capers, who quickly defers to and obeys her intended husband, Alabama does not initially realize that her marriage can bring her anything but increased independence. The wedding night--the scene closing the first section of the novel--heralds the problems that will arise in the couple's married life: while her new husband

⁶³The "invertebrate world" is specifically feminine; masculinity is "vibrant" and "clicking" (35). Later, when Alabama feels most inconsequential in her marriage, she "lay sprawled like a damp wrung towel over the windowsill, like the transparent shed carcass of a brilliant insect" (110). The latter metaphor picks up the language of the landscape passage ("hung like empty locust shells . . . about the pillars of the house") to reinforce that the married Alabama has inherited her mother's place; she is an empty husk, all that is left of a more "brilliant" self.

muses to himself that his wife "looked very lovely," Alabama thinks of resistance and freedom, calculating that her husband "for instance, couldn't possibly make her put out her light till she got good and ready. No power on earth could make her do anything . . . any more, except herself" (44).

But David Knight's very name indicates that he is more of the tradition Alabama is trying to escape than she admits; he is the soldier-knight who rescues her from the imprisonment signified by her father, "a living fortress," a "feudal donjon," whose "preference in women had created Millie [Judge Beggs' wife] and the girls" (9, 28). The wife especially is caught within the bastions of this patriarch: Alabama "saw her mother as she was, part of a masculine tradition"; she had "given [her] life for [Alabama's] father, and "there would be nothing left [of Millie] when her husband died" (186). While Alabama pities her mother for her "saintlike" self-sacrifice in the service of her husband's commanding desires, David dreamily frames Alabama as part of the same masculine tradition, as his "princess [whom he]'d like to keep . . . shut forever in an ivory tower for [his] private delectation" (10, 42). David wants only to erect a fortress of his own for Alabama, unaware that his desires could strike her as anything but romantic.

However, the "third time he wrote about the princess, Alabama asked him not to mention the tower again" (42). Confident in her ability to resist her part--at least the restrictive part--in his story and eager to escape her father, Alabama married David Knight.

- As her husband, David has more control over Alabama's "interpretation of herself" than she bargained for (11). David had irritated Alabama when he commemorated their first meeting by carving "David, David, David, Knight, Knight, Knight, and Miss Alabama Nobody" on a doorpost (39). After they marry, Alabama's identity is wholly subsumed by David's. While they courted, Alabama could refuse David's scripting of her (see page 40 when David tells Alabama to "Say 'dear'" to him, for example), but she loses control over her voice and identity in the marriage. They become the "David Knights," and his answering the phone with "Yes, this is both the Knights" emphasizes how completely he now speaks for her (96). The effect of their new relationship is not lost on others; when her parents visit the couple, Alabama's father congratulates David for having "succeeded in taming" his daughter (53).

David typifies the dominant thinking about women with which the novel takes issue. He values women's decorative value above all else and presumes that women are meant for

male enjoyment and inspiration. Alabama feels "dismay at David's reiterance that many women were flowers--flowers and desserts, love and excitement, and passion and fame!" (106). "A woman's place is with the wine," David insists to his wife (78). But David is also maddened by Alabama's failure to perform domestic duties assiduously, and he "raved and ranted and swore that it ruined his talent to have his buttons torn off in the laundry" (51). Yet David becomes irritated if Alabama "interferes" by "assert[ing] herself" in running the household if it disrupts his work schedule (87). Thus, while Alabama felt "insignificant" in her father's shadow before she married, the feeling grows stronger after her marriage. David's artistic successes and the privileging of his work over her desires and activities punctuate Alabama's feelings of emptiness. Particularly after David announces his intention to have an affair because he needs "new emotional stimulus" for his work, Alabama's sense of futility crystallizes (97). She has become restless, then resigned, then deadened.

Alabama's loss of control over the framing of her identity parallels decreasing textual depictions of her body and agency. As a child, the defiant girl revels in her body, constantly moving; "[e]verything assumed the qualities of improvisation with the constant change in the girl" (17).

"She mobilized herself" (13). But Alabama quickly learns that adulthood--marked by her changed relations to men--restricts women's bodies. Her father begins to monitor her actions when she is still a "lanky child," telling her that she is "too big" and "too old" to "sprawl on young men's laps" (24, 25). He accuses the schoolgirl of behaving like "a prostitute" when she dances on stage for a charity ball (19). The meaning of the body's regulation is made clear to Alabama when her mother tries to impose proper standards of dress: her mother tells her, "when you're going out with boys, you can't go back to short dresses" to which Alabama responds "with impotent rage, 'I won't have it! I really won't--how can I run or anything?'" (22). Her desire for (physical) freedom is at odds with propriety--as are any displays of female bodily presence. Alabama's flapper behavior is designed to embody resistance in a world of lifeless, restrained women.

Thus, Mary Gordon's assertion that "[f]lesh belongs to the mother" in this novel misses that the suppression of Alabama's sense of self stems from a patriarchal restriction of female bodies--a regulation consolidated through marriage and motherhood.⁶⁴ Flesh does not belong to the mothers, and Alabama is not too tied to the corporeal as Gordon suggests,

⁶⁴ Gordon xxii.

but increasingly estranged from it. A southern lady, Alabama's mother not only tries to restrict her daughter's bodily presentation but lacks corporeal presence herself; indeed, "[i]ncubated in the mystic pungence of Negro mammies, the family hatched into girls" seemingly without needing the body of their white, privileged mother (10). Even Alabama's own pregnancy and childbirth does not invoke the female body's presence; the birth of Bonnie, as Nancy Milford has noted, is left strangely unnarrated.⁶⁵ The lack of commentary foregrounds Alabama's growing alienation from her body and the loss of her self-control and point of view--she seems to no longer experience anything personally. It also indicates that Alabama is caught by cultural determinations from which she attempted escape. Like her mother, she is disconnected from the physical. The narrative portrays, then, not Alabama's desire to flee her "femaleness" through a denial of the body (as Gordon implies) but Alabama's loss of control over her own body within marriage and maternity.⁶⁶ Alabama needs a body to evade the stifling brand of domesticity that her world equates with womanhood.

⁶⁵ See Milford 237-38.

⁶⁶See Gordon xxiii.

But not just any kind of body will do. The only depiction of an embodied adult woman in the first sections of the novel in fact reinforces that female bodies are "for" men even when they are not contained in marriage. The body of Gabrielle Gibbs, the actress with whom David has an affair in order to enhance his artistic production, is noted by one man to be "the most beautiful body . . . like white marble" (102). Gibbs "was as dainty and rounded as a porcelain figure; . . . It was obvious that she was a dancer" (103). At dinner, Alabama overhears her husband tell Gabrielle that he has heard that she "ha[s] the most beautiful blue veins over [her] body" (104). As soon as David mentions Gabrielle's blue veins, Hastings suggests, in an unrelated comment directed toward Alabama, the "inherited concepts and acquired traditions" symbolized by blue blood (104). The juxtaposition of the comments seems designed to prompt readers to acknowledge Gabrielle Gibbs' inherent claim to high society. Then David tells Gabrielle that he imagines her "breasts were like marble dessert--a sort of blancmange" (104). These images point to a female body entirely for male consumption and appreciation, the attainable yet "transcendent" classical or "high" body of Isadora Duncan's art, a body that inspires men to Beauty. That the actress's "face was as innocent as if she had just

been delivered from the taxidermist's," however, suggests the blue-blooded woman's own lifelessness; her stuffed white body is for others' study, not for self-expression (102). Gibbs' beautiful-but-dead body is in direct contrast to the bruised and bleeding body--not a desirable body, but a resistant one--that Alabama will recover for her own through her systematic participation in dance.

It is only in the novel's portrayal of the ballet, "not from an esthetic point of view," Jacqueline Tavernier-Courbin argues, "but from the human physical experience--that of the grueling training of the body," that the female body presents itself again as under woman's control and Alabama's sense of self develops.⁶⁷ Only through dance does Alabama regain any sense of freedom and control, feeling again "the exaltation of swinging sideways down the pavements as a child and clapping her heels in the air" (117). In fact, when she decides to dance, she is again infused with the flapper's resistance: her "eyes glowed with . . . fanatic determination" as she tells her husband, "I can do exactly as I please" (111). Domestic life had reminded her of "a [war] story . . . about the soldiers of

⁶⁷Jacqueline Tavernier-Courbin, "Art as Woman's Response and Search: Zelda Fitzgerald's Save Me the Waltz," Southern Literary Journal 11.2 (1979): 24.

the Foreign Legion giving a ball in the expanses around Verdun and dancing with the corpses" (111). In ballet, she finds a chance to be something more than a dancing corpse.

The night that David and Gabrielle spend together, Alabama attends the professional ballet, where she is stirred by "the poignancy of the human body subject to its physical will" (106). Watching the dancers, she begins to awaken: her "hands were wet and shaking with [the dance's] tremolo. Her heart beat like the fluttering wings of an angry bird" (106). She determines to dance, to have the kind of self-control that she had just witnessed in the dancers. After the performance she is introduced to a retired ballerina, and Alabama asks her "breathlessly," "How did you get in the ballet? And get to be important?" (107). She has already paired the role of the dancer with an identity that is significant in itself.

Alabama does not quickly shed her world's evaluation of womanhood. Her companions initially scoff when she requests a letter of introduction to "whoever trains the ballet," not comprehending why a married woman would want to undertake such rigorous work (107). Even the women training for the ballet are confused by Alabama's motive for dancing, for she already has a husband. The socialite Dickie, who endorses

Alabama's decision, does so only because she "think[s] dancing would be an asset. . . . If the party got dull you could do a few whirlygigs," she tells Alabama (108). And though Alabama visualizes dancing in a professional context rather than in a drawing room, she also sees herself in a purely decorative context: "suavely swaying to the end of a violin bow, spinning on its silver bobbin. . . . She pictured herself as an amorphous cloud in a dressing room mirror which would be framed with cards and papers, telegrams and pictures" (108). She imagines herself in the position of Gabrielle Gibbs, the focus of an admiring crowd; in fact, after her husband stays out all night with the actress, Alabama vows that she will "be as famous a dancer as there are blue veins over the white marble of Miss Gibbs" (112). This comment suggests that she indeed wants to dance in order to gain a husband's attention.

These motivations, however, evaporate as quickly as they arise. That her decision to dance is more about realizing her own independence and value than gaining others' admiration is reflected first by her exchange with Hastings, one of her theater companions. He insists, "You need somebody to take care of you. . . . You're a man's woman and need to be bossed" (109). Alabama recognizes that what prompts his idea is "a remembrance of fairy tales," and

laughingly explains that "I was just going to begin doing it myself . . . I made a date with the Princess [the retired ballerina] . . . to arrange for a future" (109). When Hastings reminds Alabama that she has a child, implying that the "direction" of her life should be determined by her motherhood, if not her relationship to a man, Alabama simply acknowledges the insufficiency of the identity, "Yes . . . there's the baby--life goes on" (109).

The second proof that Alabama's primary motive in taking up dance is not fame or even revenge is that Alabama's initial fantasy of herself as the object of an admiring gaze closes out the novel's second section and never appears again. Indeed, when she finally realizes her ambition to dance professionally, her debut performance is not even narrated. The story skips abruptly from the end of rehearsal to the aftermath of the performance: "Alabama's feet were bleeding as she fell into bed. When at last her first performance was over. . . ." (159). Her appearance on stage is omitted altogether, even in flashback.

She is not, like Gabrielle, an exquisite body performing for others; in fact, when her friends view her dancing, they are disgusted and unsettled. They say "it's ridiculous to work like that. She can't be getting any fun out of it, foaming at the mouth that way!" and "It's

abominable! She'll never be able to get up in a drawing room and do *that*! What's the good of it?" (134). Yet "Alabama had never felt so close to a purpose as she did at that moment" of the dance (134). The audience is unimportant, the reception is unimportant; she dances only for herself. Alabama's "dancing becomes self-fulfilling . . . an end in itself. . . . Through it, she creates herself constantly. . . ." ⁶⁸ Thus, descriptions of Alabama's dance are typically Alabama's experience of her own body, "the internal sensation, rather than the appearance, of the rigors of ballet." ⁶⁹

A sentence edited from a draft of the novel clarifies Alabama's motivation: "Of all things on earth she had never wanted anything quite so much as to possess herself, as it seemed to her, that she would if she could attain a perfected control" over her body in dance. ⁷⁰ She finds this self-possession when she begins training with Madame and enters for the first time an environment of purely female "[e]ffort and aspiration, excitement, discipline, and an overwhelming seriousness" (113). "The room reeked of hard

⁶⁸Tavernier-Courbin 37.

⁶⁹Eleanor Lanahan, ed., Zelda, An Illustrated Life: The Private World of Zelda Fitzgerald (New York: Abrams, 1996) 42.

⁷⁰Qtd. in Milford 242.

work"; dancers sweat and grunt (114). At twenty-seven, Alabama is considered too old to begin training as a professional dancer. Nonetheless, she persists despite painful sessions; her "body ached and trembled," she had "blue bruises inside above the knee where the muscles were torn," "[s]he was always stiff," and "her lessons were agony" (117). In summer, the "starch in Alabama's organdy skirts stuck to her hands and sweat rolled into her eyes till she couldn't see. Choking dust rose off the floor . . ." (118). Fitzgerald continues,

The human body was very insistent. Alabama passionately hated her inability to discipline her own. Learning how to manage it was like playing a desperate game with herself. She said to herself, 'My body and I,' and took herself for an awful beating. (118)

There are no twinkling moonbeams in Fitzgerald's rendition of dance. She sweats and blisters and bruises; her muscles tear, her toenails come off, she inadvertently bites her tongue until it bleeds and must spit up the blood. The body described is painful, and the descriptions suggest a masochistic drive on Alabama's part. Yet it is this pain that forefronts the body and the female self; a kept body, a domesticated body feels no pain, the woman has no self. Susan Gubar has argued that women often express or experience creativity as "painful wounding"; "the creation of female art feels like the destruction of the female

body"⁷¹--especially because, as Lisa Nanney notes, "for many women such creativity begins as a reaction against the identities, the selves, that men have constructed for them."⁷² Indeed, Alabama explains to a friend that she dances not to gain male appreciation, not "to get anything . . . but to get rid of some of myself" (133). Alabama's battered body signifies her power of reconstruction. Alabama grows "gladly, savagely proud of the strength of her Negroid hips" (127). After a time, she is able to "bear[] her body tightly possessed, like a lance in steady hands" (141).

This self-possessed body becomes a vehicle for self-expression. Alabama's body is "like a lighthouse" and "like a quill" (108, 115) . As Lisa Nanney points out, Alabama "becomes her own text, her body her instrument of expression" (228) but Alabama sees her dance as the expression of a fundamental self--not as a method of communication with others. Visitors to the studio are seen as intruders, filling Alabama with a "vague unreasoning

⁷¹Susan Gubar, "'The Blank Page' and the Issues of Female Creativity," Writing and Sexual Difference, ed. Elizabeth Abel (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1982) 78, 86.

⁷² Lisa Nanney, "Zelda Fitzgerald's Save Me the Waltz as Southern Novel and Künstlerroman," The Female Tradition in Southern Literature, ed. Carol S. Manning (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1993) 228.

dread" (128). She felt "she must keep the studio apart from her life--otherwise one would soon become as unsatisfactory as the other, lost in an aimless, impenetrable drift" (128). Knowing that other people can curtail her self-expression, she insists that she does not dance "for the appreciation of [her] friends" and forbids their presence in the studio (128). She is after a "clear communication with herself" (161). Her body makes "forms, shapes of things" for herself alone (193).

The contrast between the representation of Anne Capers' and Alabama Beggs' dancing is dramatic, even though ballet might not strike readers as being far removed from the aesthetic dance described by Harris. Anne Capers' dance presents her body, like Gabrielle Gibbs', as a specimen for male approval; it is the beautiful object of a male gaze. Readers have no sense of Anne's perspective in dance; she is seemingly self-less. Her aesthetic dance disassociates the white woman from the body and black codes, defusing the flapper's disruptiveness. Alabama's participation in classical ballet produces an unsightly feminine body that resists a patriarchal gaze.

In fact, though historically a male-dominated art, the ballet described in Fitzgerald's novel is clearly a woman's realm of creativity in composition and performance. Ballet

aligns Alabama's body with a black and powerful body--she has "Negroid hips" and bears her body "like a lance"--and recuperates her flapperesque resistance to patriarchy without making her into a sexualized object for men. The "savagery" of her newly formed body points out its resistance to domestication. Whereas Anne relinquishes her control over her body's representation to a man who "masters" her, Alabama masters herself, gaining control over her body's movements.

Like Fitzgerald's flapper ideal, Alabama is self-possessed--her hard, sweating, self-controlled body deviates from the softness, seductiveness, and passivity of the conventional womanly body. In fact, despite the "disciplining" of her body and her commitment to her work, Alabama has "an undercurrent of disrespect for discipline" that places her in "a hoydenish comradeship" with the best dancer in the studio (143). Thus, Alabama returns in her studio experience to the pleasures of her youth without patriarchal restrictions; she is "hoydenish" again.

As this chapter has illustrated, one way of containing the flapper was to place her body into the security of male possession. Fitzgerald's story dislodges that domesticated body from patriarchal control and remolds it. Alabama's time at the studio estranges her from her husband, denying

him possession of or authority over her body, but without ever forcing Alabama to relinquish her identity as a wife. When she receives the offer of a position with the San Carlos Opera, David pressures her to dismiss the invitation, pointing to her "obligations" (149). "David seemed to feel that there was something accidental about the note" (149). In fact, he begins to plan a trip back to the United States, but Alabama defies him. She leaves her family and travels to Naples for her professional debut. Living on her own, Alabama felt "[h]er movements gathered up in consequential stirrings of the air" for the first time in her married life (156). Unlike Anne Capers' mother, Alabama never thinks that her professional dancing must prompt the dissolution of her marriage or that it must mean she relinquish her relationship to her daughter. In fact, young Bonnie visits Alabama in Naples for two weeks while her mother rehearses; upon returning to her father, Bonnie tells him that her mother's only "piece of advice that she had to give [to her daughter] was not to be a backseat driver about life" (176).

Alabama's movement away from conventional family life to pursue her own ambition was radical enough that one of the book's reviewers simply dismissed the content of the latter half of the book, blithely insisting that dancing was

"a career [Alabama] never really wanted."⁷³ The novel does point to the difficulty of both marriage and career for women; one ballerina must retire when "her husband exhausted her knees so she couldn't dance" (107). In fact, Alabama's continued relationship with her husband indirectly causes the end of her own career. Alabama gets blood poisoning when her foot becomes infected by the glue in the expensive toe shoes afforded only by David's money; in a sense, her continuing economic dependence on the marriage forces the end of her career by undermining her body. After surgeons cut the tendons in her foot, she mourns, "Oh, my body" (181). David's suggestion that her illness has brought them together again brings little consolation to Alabama. Though her "broken body" will heal, she will never dance again (180).

Alabama's wings do seem to have been clipped at novel's end. She returns to her father's house, a house suffused with death, and to the mundane domestic, a condition marked by the neighbors' lifeless chatter:

"We've talked you to death."

"You must be dead with packing."

"It's death to a party to stay till digestion sets in."

"I'm dead, my dear. It's been wonderful."

(196)

⁷³New York Herald Tribune Books, 30 October 1932: 10.

Readers are left to wonder if Alabama herself is the speaker of the last line. But if Alabama is seemingly dead, David is credited with life, appropriating the activity of dance: "We love those last pictures," the neighbors' gush, "Nobody has ever handled the ballet with any vitality since--" (194). David interrupts them to explain his work: "I thought . . . that rhythm, being a purely physical exercise of the eyeball, that the waltz picture would actually give you, by leading the eye in pictorial choreography, the same sensation as following the measure with your feet" (194). Interestingly, the subject of David's painting--ballet dancers performing a waltz--is elided in his comments, which privilege instead authority and spectatorship. Merely looking at the painting, he egotistically asserts, will enable the viewer to know what it is to be the dancer; (male) representation takes the place of (female) bodily experience. Ironically, David appropriates the dance that Alabama so loved for his own glorification. Not only has his work gained him a New York exhibition, but David's vision of the ballet is popular enough that his pictures have gone into reproduction. Alabama can only watch and listen.

Given such an ending, it is not surprising that commentators have pointed to the novel's title as indicating

a conventional coupling between a man and women in which the man leads and the woman follows. Tavernier-Courbin, for example, says that the title reflects "the desire of a woman to free herself from her subordinate position in a man's world" and "[a]t the same time the title is ruefully ironic because it indicates the supremacy of man in the world he has created and his conviction that he owns the woman as an object."⁷⁴ It is the man who requests that a woman "save" a waltz for him. But when David and Alabama waltz, it is a clumsy affair:

"There they are, the Knights, dancing together," they said, "isn't it nice? There they go."

"Listen, Alabama, you're not keeping time," David was saying.

"David, for God's sake will you try to keep off of my feet?"

"I never could waltz anyway." (48-49)

Clearly, neither partner would want to do this dance again.

Yet the novel's title could be read not just from a conventional masculine perspective as a polite request to a pretty woman, but as though it were the woman's voice. In fact, the title could be read as Alabama's final articulation of resistance and as a subversion of conventional romantic pairings. The waltz that needs to be

⁷⁴Tavernier-Courbin 32. See also Linda W. Wagner, "Save Me the Waltz: An Assessment in Craft," Journal of Narrative Technique 12.3 (1982): 205-208.

"saved" is Alabama's own singular performance, not the romanticized parlor dance that would place Alabama as following David's lead and David stepping on her toes, nor David's artistic rendition of the ballet dancers' waltz. The waltz of the title is "the intricacies of the waltz from *Pavillon d'Armide*" that Alabama demands to learn from Madame (134-35). It is "the waltz" from *Swan Lake* that Alabama rehearses continuously for her debut as lead ballerina--a dance that her illness prevents her from performing publicly (167). Despite the fact that ballet waltzes are typically *pas de deux*, no partner is ever mentioned for Alabama in either of these waltzes. The waltz is a dance that Fitzgerald's readers are to believe Alabama does alone. It is a dance that marks her competence and self-possession, a dance that should be saved and remembered.

Interestingly, the novel's original dust jacket, which Fitzgerald had no hand in designing, introduces the male dance partner conspicuously absent in the text. Two romanticized figures, a man and woman in ballet costume, intertwine arms and clasp hands. He gazes at her; she, following his leading hand, gazes into the distant horizon. Their bodies are pretty and proportionate, and they dance among flowers. Zelda Fitzgerald's own paintings and sketches of ballet dancers imagine a very different scene.

Her ballerinas have powerful limbs, hardened muscles, enlarged feet and hands; they are not conventionally beautiful, but appear powerful, intent on their own bodies, and disciplined--like the female dancers in her text. For readers expecting from Save Me the Waltz's cover a conventional romance, Fitzgerald's vision of female independence and self-control choreographs an alternative vision of an old dance.

Though Alabama cannot dance at the end, she goes on dancing alone in her mind. She thinks "schstay, schstay, brisé, schstay" as "phrase[s of conversation] danced along the convolutions of her brain" (193). Despite her body's "failure," Alabama's final words indicate the triumph of a continuing self: emptying herself of "the past," "this deep reservoir," she says, "that was once myself, I am ready to continue" (196). All along, "The joy [was] not in the achievement itself but in the achieving, in the work, the tense body, the sweat itself."⁷⁵ Through dance, Alabama has realized that process rather than achievement is most important; in Gubar's terms, Alabama continues to re-interpret herself by "an act or process" not as the "artistic object" the world expects but as an artist performing her continuing self (94).

⁷⁵Tavernier-Courbin 37.

The cultural appropriation and domestication of the disruptive flapper had long irritated Zelda Fitzgerald by the time she wrote Save Me the Waltz. She had defended the flapper as a manifestation of female ambition, freedom and self-control. Coupled with her defense of flapper values was a complaint that the young flapper was increasingly "scarcely distinguishable from . . . [her] debutante sisters of ten years" prior, willing and even eager to put her flapper identity aside as soon as she met the proper man who would ready her for marriage.⁷⁶ Fitzgerald wanted the flapper to "live by her accomplishments" but noted with disgust that instead "[f]lapperdom ha[d] become a game" in which the flapper's "outer accoutrements" were worn simply because "audacity and earrings and one-piece bathing suits ha[d] become fashionable."⁷⁷ She observed that the "open galoshes and covered-up ears and all other proverbial flapper paraphernalia" were "amusing externals of a large class of females who in no way deserve the distinction of being called flappers."⁷⁸

Lamenting that the "flapper creed"--"to do what is pleasant and what they please"--was "no longer a philosophy"

⁷⁶Fitzgerald, "Eulogy on the Flapper" 391.

⁷⁷Fitzgerald, "Eulogy on the Flapper" 391, 392.

⁷⁸Fitzgerald, "What Became of the Flappers?" 397.

guiding young women's actions, Fitzgerald wrote the flapper's "eulogy" in 1922.⁷⁹ She tried to kill the figure off in an attempt, I think, to forestall the efforts of those who would strip the flapper of her meaning. While popular media effectively remolded flappers as "normal" young women desiring marriage and motherhood, Fitzgerald worked to consolidate the female empowerment initially signified by the flapper image by divesting them of the title "flapper." For if "[t]he Flapper is deceased," the radical image becomes myth, keeping the notion of rebellious femininity alive even as young women seemingly took to domestic roles. Proclaimed dead, the flapper could function as a counter-story, as a possibility of resistance to dominating ideals. Declaring the flapper dead at the moment Fitzgerald proclaims the flapper's "right to experiment with herself" keeps the flapper from coming like other women to "one of many bitter ends"; she remains always a figure of self-renewal and possibility. Save Me the Waltz illustrates how the flapper ideal can revise the narrative of domesticity long after flappers have become wives and mothers.

⁷⁹Fitzgerald, "What Became of the Flappers?" 398; "Eulogy on the Flapper" 392.

Coda

Whatever her contemporaries thought would be the outcome of her social skirmishes, today historians concede that the flapper lost the war. Emily Clark's observation about the short-lived nature of the flappers' disruptions nicely summarizes the currently accepted story: though the "revolt of youth was serious and intense, . . . within ten years the feminine world would go quietly back to long hair, long skirts, curves, and corsets--and like them."⁸⁰ Scholars of women's roles have noted for years that the "freedoms" and gains associated with the figure of the flapper were of limited scope in women's lives.⁸¹ In fact, Zelda Fitzgerald often tautologically marks for many commentators the generic flapper's inability to make real social or personal gains; that is, Fitzgerald's personal "failure"--her troubled marriage, periodic institutionalization, and early death--has come to signify the flapper's self-destructiveness or ineffectuality.⁸²

⁸⁰Clark 4.

⁸¹See William H. Chafe, The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century (New York: Oxford UP, 1991); Barbara J. Harris, Beyond Her Sphere (Westport: Greenwood P, 1978); Higashi, Virgins, Vamps, and Flappers; and Mary P. Ryan, Womanhood in America (New York: New Viewpoints, 1975).

⁸²In such analyses, the "failure" of the flapper to work as a viable identity is proved by an unexamined elision of the "history" of the flapper with the biography of Zelda

Recent historians dispute even what previous studies did grant, that women's sexual emancipation arose out of the twenties. Pamela S. Haag argues, for instance, that "sexual modernization, while it conceded that women might be sexual beings, never established that women were sexual subjects, in unconditional possession even of their heterosexual desire."⁸³

This history suggests another reason for the absence of an established record of southern flappers. As she has come

Fitzgerald. Barbara Harris's analysis in Beyond Her Sphere typifies this tendency: "The story of Zelda and F. Scott Fitzgerald, who symbolized the irresponsible, madly happy youth of affluent high society in the 1920s, is as adequate as any feminist commentary could be on the flapper ideal. . . . Their lives together ended tragically: Zelda died in an insane asylum, Scott became an alcoholic" (141). Betty L. Mitchell's short summary of Zelda Fitzgerald's life for the Encyclopedia of Southern Culture, eds. Charles Reagan Wilson and William Ferris (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1989) similarly suggests that Fitzgerald was a "belle who lived life in the fast lane, rejected the innocent passivity of the 'true woman' to boldly embrace the modern 'New Woman': the flapper who used her good looks and sexual allure to get what she wanted from men. But this new brand of femininity was equally perverse, even schizophrenic, and Zelda finally succumbed" (851). In both instances, Zelda Fitzgerald's breakdowns signify the failure of the flapper as a feasible identity and Fitzgerald's adherence to current definitions of flapper ideals forebode her illness.

⁸³Pamela S. Haag, "In Search of 'The Real Thing': Ideologies of Love, Modern Romance, and Women's Sexual Subjectivity in the United States, 1920-40," Journal of the History of Sexuality 2.4 (1992), rpt. in American Sexual Politics: Sex, Gender, and Race Since the Civil War, eds. John C. Fout and Maura Shaw Tantilillo (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1993) 170.

to be consolidated into history, the flapper reads like the sister story of the southern belle. Like the belle, the flapper is by definition a product of affluence and leisure. Like the belle, she is vivacious, pretty, and able to charm acceptable men, one of whom she will eventually marry. If the belle sees herself "as a beautiful object," the flapper makes an art of "being young, being lovely, being an object."⁸⁴ After marriage, the flapper settles as easily--or as uneasily--as the belle into motherhood and the estate suiting a lady. The flapper's departures from convention, like those of the high-spirited belle, were finally short-lived and not terribly radical in a political or material sense, feminist scholars note. Commentaries rarely speculate, however, about how a figure so disruptive to normative femininity in the 1920s became so easily aligned with it.

There was a concerted cultural effort to tame the unruly flapper--one that did not fully work. For despite the fact that the women who were flappers went on to lead lives not much different from their mothers', the public imagination still draws significant distinctions between flappers and belles. The flapper still lives on as the

⁸⁴Seidel 32; Fitzgerald, "What Became of the Flappers?" 398.

image of female resistance originally articulated by Zelda Fitzgerald. I propose that this idea of the flapper as feminist resistance proves more important than the actuality, for the flapper's myth challenges seemingly static and self-evident definitions of femininity. Zelda Fitzgerald's flapper evinced a feminism that began to circulate in the late twenties, a feminism that moved beyond women's quest for political or economic opportunities to include "the right to self-expression, self-determination, and personal satisfaction."⁸⁵ The flapper--the mythic flapper that Fitzgerald imagined--epitomized this feminism and paved the way for all women to reconsider their roles in life.

Three years after Zelda Fitzgerald writes of the flapper's passing, her contribution to Favorite Recipes of Famous Women (1925) illustrates how the flapper could still parodically undermine the conventional equation of womanhood with matronly domesticity. The volume upholds the idea that women's "health and happiness" rest in their ability to cook, which itself marks a "secret ambition to win hearts they loved." The editor reasons that "a man-made cake was but a cold ensemble of ingredients, . . . [whereas] that of a woman was a blend of good things, beautiful smiles, and

⁸⁵ Fass 23.

that indescribable spirit that ever goes from a real artist into his work," concluding that "only a woman can ever know and understand the real art of the kitchen" by "deft touch and instinctive supremacy."⁸⁶ The framework of the cookbook elevates food preparation to an ideal realm of love and art--arguably, a move that at least raises the status of the family cook to that of an artist. In doing so, the cookbook naturalizes women's roles as cooks and suggests that women have a moral obligation to serve their families. The cookbook contributors, ranging from diplomats' wives to film stars, Helen Keller, and Anita Loos, do little except agree tacitly by offering over 150 recipes. Even independent single women who presumably do little cooking for themselves or others thus are brought, simply by submitting a recipe, into an ideological stance in which they endorse a conventional idea that the domestic sphere is woman's proper, preferred, and most natural place.

The collection offers up recipes for the First Lady's Pineapple Salad, Mrs. Henry Ford's Winter Strawberry Shortcake, Jack London's wife's Corned Beef and Cabbage, Dorothy Dix's Barbecue Chicken, and the Talmadge sisters' recipes for cake, as well as less mundane formulas for "A

⁸⁶Favorite Recipes of Famous Women, ed. and with a foreword by Florence Stratton (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1925) xix-xx.

Happy Meal" and "A Recipe for a Good Citizen" (offered by the former president of the National Congress of Mothers). In a collection that contains such helpful tips as "[m]en like ladies who are clever, who are witty, who are wise; but the brightest girls endeavor to make pies like mother's pies," Fitzgerald's piece stands out for its lack of reverence for "womanly" concerns.⁸⁷ Printed under the by-line "Mrs. F. Scott Fitzgerald, Wife of the author of 'The Beautiful and Damned,' 'The Jazz Age,' etc.," the recipe for "Breakfast" (buried near the end of the volume) consists entirely of the following directions:

See if there is any bacon, and if there is, ask the cook which pan to fry it in. Then ask if there are any eggs, and if so try and persuade the cook to poach two of them. It is better not to attempt toast, as it burns very easily. Also in the case of bacon, do not turn the fire too high, or you will have to get out of the house for a week.

Serve preferably on china plates, though gold or wood will do if handy. (98)

Such a scandalous recipe conveys more than elitism.

Fitzgerald's recipe disrupts the ideological work of the cookbook, making women's "earnest" desire to participate in nurturing and to take on domestic responsibilities suspect--even poking fun at such feelings.

⁸⁷Mrs. Aline Michaelis, "A Tip," Favorite Recipes 2-3.

Fitzgerald's piece must remind the very women who would buy into being model wives (those who would purchase cookbooks compiled by famous women) that they need not strive to fulfill the cultural expectation for women to provide meals regularly for their families, manage households effectively, cook anything like mother cooked, or concern themselves with the details of place settings. Her message is a far cry from the message sent in the same year by The Ladies' Home Journal on the morning meal:

Although breakfast is usually the most informal meal of the day and, in most cases, the simplest, it is, from many points of view, the most important. For who can estimate the value of a breakfast carefully and attractively served in cheerful surroundings on the subsequent happenings of the day which follows? As the day begins so it is very likely to progress.⁸⁸

The two-page spread goes on to discuss in elaborate detail the process of setting table service for an "American breakfast," which "is simpler than formerly, most people considering fruit and cereal, followed by a light main dish consisting of eggs cooked in one of the many possible ways, bacon, alone or as an accompaniment to eggs, or liver, or a creamed meat or fish, with hot rolls, muffins or toast, and coffee, ample" (123). The flapper's antics and attitudes

⁸⁸Mabel Jewett Crosby, "Setting the Breakfast Table to Reflect Hominess and Cheer," The Ladies' Home Journal September 1925: 123.

must have seemed particularly liberated (and liberating) when set against the oppressively mundane services performed by more traditional--or at least more traditionally depicted--women. Perhaps especially for women who were not flappers, especially for women who married and mothered, the flapper was an emblem of female resistance and freedom possible even within the bounds of domesticity.

CHAPTER 5
KATHERINE ANNE PORTER'S "MANGLED CREATURES":
DISFIGURING THE FEMININE AND FLEEING THE DOMESTIC

"I don't want the skin," she said, "I won't have it."¹

Nina Baym argues that Katherine Anne Porter's work extends the "project of domestic fiction" begun by antebellum writers such as E.D.E.N. Southworth. Locating Porter within a tradition of women writers who "turned against the postbellum Southern myth and attempted to expose it as myth in order to move the South and its women beyond restrictions," Baym argues that in Porter's writing "postbellum fictions of Southern womanhood are critiqued even as their suffocating power is acknowledged."² Indeed, much of Porter's work pointedly details the press of cultural storytelling, exposing the ways that "fictions" and "myth" are distilled from a variety of sources to arrange women's lives. Porter's several expansions of Miranda Gay,

¹Katherine Anne Porter, "The Grave," 1935; rpt. in The Collected Stories of Katherine Anne Porter (1965; San Diego: HBJ, 1979) 367.

²Baym, "The Myth of the Myth of Southern Womanhood," Feminism and American Literary History: Essays (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1992) 184, 196.

following the character's first appearance in stories sketched for "The Old Order," especially explore the effects of familial stories about heterosexual love and courtship, marriage, sexuality, pregnancy, birth, and death--domestic themes defining Southern womanhood.

Baym notes that the "appeal" of domestic fiction for both northern and southern nineteenth-century female readers, who accepted a separate-spheres rhetoric that celebrated women's moral preeminence and natural predisposition for domestic affairs, was "its promise of possible self-actualization, of personal and social identity for women independent of men, and its vision of a useful role for women on a national scale" achieved through depictions of the "power" of domesticity.³ While Porter's purpose may indeed be aligned with that of domestic novelists (at least as Baym identifies their purpose), Porter's work attempts to achieve for her readers similar ends by forcefully rejecting rather than celebrating or recuperating the woman's part in the domestic, familial identities, and romantic relations with men. Porter's writing thus deviates significantly from the tradition of domestic fiction that Baym outlines, ultimately suggesting that the domestic stories dominating the definitions of

³Baym 188.

womanhood serve merely to cloak deformed women. In fact, the Miranda cycle reveals that, for Porter, "mangled" female bodies lie at the heart of any narrative of domesticity.

To be sure, Porter's vision of gender relations and domesticity inscribes a disturbing gender essentialism, for it is naturally "destructive" male desire that Porter ultimately points to as causing female mutilation. She conceived of the root of love as a kind of "reciprocal cannibalism"--"one of the earliest biological symptoms (Boy Eats Girl and vice versa)"--but believed that women are socialized to nurture the men they love, who in turn, "destroy" women.⁴ As her reference to cannibalism suggests, Porter identifies a man's love or desire as a physical attack that threatens to consume the woman bodily and spiritually: Porter vows that "no man will break my bones with his 'love'--all my vampires have disappeared." She feels she has nurtured with her blood; only when her lovers have left her, drained but fundamentally intact, does she feel the "obstructions and obstacles are cleared away" for

⁴Katherine Anne Porter, "'Marriage is Belonging,'" 1951; rpt. in The Collected Essays and Occasional Writings of Katherine Anne Porter (New York: Delacorte, 1970) 188; "Letter to Edward Schwartz," 26 March 1958, Letters of Katherine Anne Porter, ed. Isabel Bayley (New York: Atlantic Monthly P, 1090) 549.

her to get on with her writing.⁵ Her picture of marriage and family, then, is unsurprisingly bleak: the very best domestic arrangements create a

blood tie that binds [the family members], and may bind them sometimes to the bone. Children cut their teeth on their parents and their parents cut their wisdom teeth on each other: that is what they are there for. . . . [T]he blood-bond, however painful, is the condition of human life in this world, the absolute point of all departure and return.⁶

The pretty stories of marriage "as the very crown and glory of human ties, a one-man-one-woman-until-death sort of marriage, rivaling the swans for purity" cloak domesticity's bloody, chewed-up bodies.⁷ Worse, women reared to sacrifice themselves to sustain this "condition of human life" are then "symbolized almost out of existence" by "man, the myth maker"; they are

the earth, the moon, the sea, the planet Venus, certain stars, wells, lakes, mines, caves, . . . the fig, the pear, the pomegranate, the shell, the lily, wheat or any grain, Night or any kind of darkness, any seed pod at all; above all, once for all, the Rose--

⁵Katherine Anne Porter, "Letter to Glenway Wescott," 23 October 1954, Letters of Katherine Anne Porter 460.

⁶Katherine Anne Porter, "'Marriage is Belonging'" 191.

⁷Katherine Anne Porter, "'Marriage is Belonging'" 189.

"a perverted image," not a body, not a woman.⁸ Men do not want women to speak as women, Porter insists, recounting that when she says something men do not want to hear, they criticize her for speaking "like a woman": "And I say, 'What do you expect me to talk like?' and one very gallant old friend said, 'Like an arch-angel, of course!'"⁹

Porter uses the mangled bodies that arise repeatedly in her fiction to mount a cultural critique and to begin to rewrite women's prescribed identities. "[T]he bodies in southern women's fiction are intensely political," Patricia Yaeger notes, and the "grotesque body," in particular, causes "the ideology that controls southern bodies [to] explode[] in the most unexpected of ways."¹⁰ Porter's turn to the grotesque establishes her stories' feminist content. Always negotiating the gap between dominating stories and Miranda's experience, the materiality of a grotesque female or female-identified body extricates women from the mythic feminine. Specifically, by contradicting the beautiful

⁸Katherine Anne Porter, "The Flower of Flowers," 1950; rpt. in The Collected Essays and Occasional Writings of Katherine Anne Porter 147, 148.

⁹Katherine Anne Porter, "Letter to Edward Schwartz," 26 March 1958, Letters of Katherine Anne Porter 549.

¹⁰Patricia Yaeger, "Beyond the Hummingbird: Southern Women Writers and the Southern Gargantua," Haunted Bodies, eds. Anne Goodwyn Jones and Susan Donaldson, (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, forthcoming) 293.

feminine body enmeshed in dominant stories of womanhood, this grotesque body demythologizes women and incarnates their suffering. Checking established ideas about women and the feminine, "Holiday,"¹¹ "The Old Order,"¹² "Old Mortality," and "Pale Horse, Pale Rider" evidence the inaccuracy or incompleteness of the prevailing stories of

¹¹Because of the similarities between Miranda and the unnamed first-person narrator of "Holiday" and because Porter wrote "Holiday" during the period she completed other Miranda stories, critics often link "Holiday" to stories in the Miranda cycle. See Mary Titus, "'A Little Stolen Holiday': Katherine Anne Porter's Narrative of the Woman Artist," Women's Studies 25 (1995) 76-77; Darlene Harboure Unrue, Truth and Vision in Katherine Anne Porter's Fiction (Athens: UGA Press, 1985) 147; and Willene Hendrick and George Hendrick, Katherine Anne Porter (Boston: Twayne, 1988) 65. "Holiday" is the only Miranda story, however, in which the narrator and the primary character are wholly collapsed, although the indirect free style of narration that Porter uses in the other stories sometimes causes critics to confuse their narrative voice with Miranda's. For instance, in "The Ring or the Dove," Women and War: The Changing Status of American Women from the 1930s to the 1950s, eds. Maria Diedrich and Dorteia Fischer-Hornung (New York: Berg, 1990), Esim Erdim assumes that Miranda is the narrator of "The Journey" (55). The autobiographical origin for the Miranda stories also positions Porter herself as both narrator and Miranda. Noting that Porter's unpublished work often uses "I" and "Miranda" interchangeably, Mary Titus insists that "the fictive 'she' was a hairsbreadth away from the [authorial] 'I'" in the Miranda stories. See Titus, "The Agrarian Myth and Southern Womanhood," Redefining Autobiography in Twentieth-Century Women's Fiction, eds. Janice Morgan and Colette T. Hall (New York: Garland, 1991) 194.

¹²"The Old Order" is a collection of short stories that includes "The Source," "The Journey," "The Witness," "The Circus," "The Last Leaf," "The Fig Tree," and "The Grave." The final two episodes especially develop Miranda's character.

femininity and pose counter-stories that disrupt naturalized depictions of domestic womanhood.

Porter's short story "Holiday" illustrates my point. The story opens by proposing that opposing narratives of domesticity can be equally true--in fact, it submits itself as evidence of this idea. The narrator's friend Louise enthusiastically suggests a place for the narrator's holiday, a "very simple and nice" place to which the narrator can escape by herself from some obscure "painful" circumstance related, the text suggests, to the narrator's home life (407, 409).¹³ Louise paints an appealing picture of a hearty farm family, with father and mother and "endless daughters and sons and sons-in-law and fat babies falling about the place"--"a family of real old-fashioned German peasants, in the deep blackland Texas farm country, a household in real patriarchal style--the kind of thing you'd hate to live with but is very nice to visit'" (408). The house has an attic room--"a sweet place!"--complete with a stack of sentimental books, "The Duchess, Ouida, Mrs. E.D.E.N. Southworth, Ella Wheeler Wilcox's poems," and

¹³Parentetical documentation for "Holiday" and subsequent Porter stories refers to The Collected Stories of Katherine Anne Porter. "Holiday" was first published in 1960, with scant changes from the original 1923-24 manuscript.

Louise remembers, "'everybody was so healthy and good-hearted, and the weather was perfect'" (408).

But Louise's sketch of idyllic life on the farm is undercut from the start by the narrator, who says with hindsight that Louise "told amusing stories that did not turn grim on you until a little while later, when by chance you saw and heard for yourself. So with this story. Everything was just as Louise had said, if you like, and everything was, at the same time, quite different" (408). Porter thus sets readers up to discover the second story, the "grim," "quite different" account of family life with the Müllers. This counter-story is literally embodied (rather than articulated) by Ottilie, the "crippled and badly deformed servant girl," who is revealed, near the story's end, to be another of the Müller daughters (415). Her figure disrupts the domestic ideal, exposing the trapped "mangled creature" within domesticity. Ottilie makes manifest the hidden deformity of the seemingly normal female position: all the women in the household, including the narrator, mirror Ottilie, although at first their relation to her mutilated figure is cloaked.

The narrator's mixed first reaction to the Müller homestead frames "Holiday"'s competing stories of domesticity. The red-cheeked Müller boy who meets her at

the train station is "cheerful, detached, self-possessed" (409). Yet the house itself "stood there staring and naked, an intruding stranger" against a backdrop of "barns ranged generously along the back" (411). Louise had promised a place radiating fertility, but to the narrator's eyes the domestic seat represents barrenness and sacrifice: the house "was set on the peak of the barest rise of ground, as if the most infertile spot had been thriftily chosen for building a shelter" (411). The house's "narrow windows and the steeply sloping roof oppressed [the narrator]; [she] wished to turn away and go back," yet as she draws closer to the house and sees the "lamplight" from the kitchen, her "feelings changed again toward warmth and tenderness, or perhaps just an apprehension that [she] could feel so, maybe, again" (411). And when she surveys her attic room with its "dime novels heaped in the corner," the narrator recognizes it with relief. She recalls thinking, "For once, Louise had got it straight, and it was homely and familiar, as if I had seen it before" (412).

The narrator's relief grows as she moves through the house, but the narrator seems seduced by the outward comforts and appeals of an "ideal" domesticity that the story works to dislodge. Both the attic and the kitchen are coded as idealized "feminine" spaces. Even if the cause of

her undefined pain and trouble is not her own experience of domestic discord, the lamplight and the kitchen--the feminine heart of the household--summon the narrator's flagging belief in domestic "warmth and tenderness."¹⁴ As she enters further into the domestic realm, drawn by its familiarity and warmth, she forgets her outsider's sense of its coffin-like "narrowness," strangeness and oppressiveness. Her faith seems fully restored in an attic room that seems particularly "homely" and comforting.

In fact, some critics of "Holiday" accept the attic room as evidence that Louise really has "got it straight." Mary Titus points to the attic bedroom in "Holiday" as a conventional symbol of the female writer's retreat, arguing that especially in its placement "atop an especially patriarchal household," the room creates a refuge from imposition of patriarchal order.¹⁵ And the female-authored books left in the attic room by a prior "lady boarder" seemingly place the narrator of "Holiday" squarely within the imaginative space of women (408). In fact, after settling into the attic room, the narrator's household

¹⁴Commentators point to the story as recounting events that occurred when Porter left her first husband after nine years of marriage. See Joan Givner, Katherine Anne Porter: A Life (1982; Athens: U of Georgia P, 1991) 98-99; and Mary Titus, "'A little stolen holiday'" 75-76.

¹⁵Titus, "'A little stolen holiday'" 83.

observations concentrate on the Müller women's strengths and character--a perspective placing "Holiday"'s storyteller clearly within the tradition of Southworth and Ouida, who "advoca[te] . . . a 'home' run by women" independent of men.¹⁶ In this logic, the narrator escapes the oppressiveness of the patriarchal household by rising above it to celebrate women's space and abilities.

But the opening of "Holiday" has promised the exposure of competing and cloaked stories, and--unsurprisingly--another reading of the scene imposes itself. The attic bedroom offering such relief to the narrator is identified as "Louise's attic room," and the narrator has already warned that Louise's descriptions cannot be trusted because they defy actual experience. At the train station, the narrator mused "that unless [Louise] was to be a novelist, there was no excuse for her having so much imagination" (409). Maybe the sentimental writers whose works accent the attic retreat are, like Louise, not wholly accurate in their depictions of domesticity and escape from patriarchal order. Perhaps, as with Louise's story, Porter has another, darker version of their tales of home and hearth.

In this reading, the attic does not mark a successful escape from oppressiveness as much as it does escapism. In

¹⁶Baym 189.

fact, the story's first paragraph suggests a distinction between escape and escapism that the narrator says she learned only after the events in the story take place. She recounts that at the time of her holiday she felt "there was nothing to do but run away from [her troubles]" (407). She continues, "But this story I am about to tell you happened before this great truth impressed itself upon me--that we do not run from the troubles and dangers that are truly ours, and it is better to learn what they are earlier than later, and if we don't run from the others, we are fools" (407). Her statement implies that at the time of the story, she was motivated by escapism. Like women readers of sentimental fiction, the narrator "escapes" only to a lofty and escapist ideal of home and hearth that obscures its solid foundation in and service to oppressive patriarchal ideology.

Comfortably insulated in her attic, raised above the interactions of the family, the narrator can listen to and idealize the sounds of their domestic activities with a sense of serene but ultimately false detachment. The attic retreat provides a space where the narrator feels untouched. The "thick warm voices" speaking a language she does not understand "in the household below [were] part of the pleasantness," for they seem to make no demands upon her: "they were not talking to me and did not expect me to

answer" (413). The narrator's comments suggest that she and the Miranda of the later tales are motivated by the same impulse to evade the ties--and inquisition--of family. At the start of "Pale Horse, Pale Rider," for example, Miranda dreams of escaping her family, knowing that she "must get up and go" while her family sleeps, knowing that when they awaken, their "faces will beam asking, Where are you going, What are you doing, What are you thinking, How do you feel, Why do you say such things, What do you mean?" (269). In the Müllers' attic space, the narrator can forget herself and take comfort in romanticized depictions of the domestic: there, she is "moved and touched but not troubled by [the voices that she hears]" (413). High in her attic room, she perhaps feels that she can escape the kind of "accumulation of storied dust never allowed to settle in peace for one moment" in Miranda's family home ("PH, PR" 269).

Yet the narrator's retreat to the attic does not alter the kind of stories played out in the domestic space below; it simply enables the narrator to refuse to listen reflexively. The books in the attic may privilege depictions of women's lives and even seem to shake the weight of patriarchal roles, but they do not disrupt the fundamental ideology with which Porter complains women are "brought up"--"the notion of feminine chastity and

inaccessibility, yet with the curious idea of feminine availability in all spiritual ways, and in giving service to anyone who demands it."¹⁷ In fact, the narrator's initial "apprehension" that she might again feel the "warmth and tenderness" of a domestic situation suggests that she personally has something to fear or something at stake in the downstairs stories of female chastity, spiritual accessibility, and selfless service to others (411). Indeed, "Holiday" reveals that the narrator is mistaken to believe that as a woman, she can be "moved and touched but not troubled" personally while the domestic scene framed by an ideology of female service and selflessness unfolds about her.

Married off while still young, the Müller women know no lives but labor and service. Such is their position in life: they stand smiling behind their husbands at the dinner table, re-filling the husbands' plates as they are emptied. They walk about "in a stupor of fatigue," tending animals and children and men and gardens, yet they remain

¹⁷Porter, interview with Barbara Thompson, Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews, ed. Malcolm Cowley, 1963; rpt. in Katherine Anne Porter: Conversations, ed. Joan Givner (Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1987) 95. Porter pointed to the incompatibility of such determinations of patriarchal womanhood with the demands of her own artistic life at the same time that she acknowledged the powerful sway that gender prescriptions had over her: her artistic work was "interrupted by just anyone who could jimmy his way into [her] life," she notes (95).

cheerful (420). They "would always work too hard, and be tired all [their] li[ves], and never know that this was anything but perfectly natural" (421). They sacrifice themselves for men and children; in fact, Mother Müller dies of pneumonia because she refuses to change out of her own wet clothes before she "attend[s] to" her husband (430). Given the expectation that women service others, it is not surprising that none of the sisters are as "self-possessed" as the youngest boy; indeed, a reader might have trouble keeping their identities separate.

In fact, though the story focuses on these women, it really seems to depict one woman in different stages of her life. The narrator witnesses the gamut of the traditional woman's life through the several women in the household: during her stay with the Müllers, she observes young Hatsy's wedding, Gretchen's advancing pregnancy and childbirth, Annetje's established role as wife and mother, and the matriarch's rule and death, surrounded by family. At every stage, women's lives are marked by the same (reproductive) labors. With their "enormous energy and animal force," they seem to differ little from the stock that they tend (416). The mother wears "her wooden yoke" to carry milking pails (414) and refuses to let sons help her daughters with the milking for "milk is not business for a man" (430);

unmarried Hatsy "struggle[s] with [the children at dinner] only a little less energetically than she did with the calves, and ate almost nothing" herself (415); "calves bawl[] like rebellious babies" (414) and the new baby "bawl[s] and suckle[s] like a young calf" (414, 428). Even the crippled servant--the only woman who is markedly different--is carrying pitchers of milk the first time the narrator sees her.

This version of domesticity comforts and reassures rather than distresses the narrator, perhaps because, milkless and alone, she can measure her deviation from the Müller women. In fact, she always highlights her position as mere visitor to the scene. Her status as "a stranger and a guest," she notes, allows her to be seated with the men at the table while the women of the household tend to her requirements (415). But her "removed" position is not so clearly removed. She "settle[s] easily enough" into the Müllers' daily routine (417). The "inertia of [the women's] minds" and their "muscular life"--a life of the body--impresses the narrator, who begins to feel "the hidden knotted painful places in [her] own mind beginning to loosen. It was easier to breathe . . ." (418). Helping Hatsy with the garden, the narrator experiences the "comfortable vertigo" of a "stooping posture" (418). Under

her tending, "the earth grew firmer underfoot with the swelling tangle of crowding roots" (418). The narrator is lulled, disoriented, by a naturalized domestic routine and her participation in earthy parturition.

The servant alone causes the narrator any thought; she is "outside" the domestic frame, yet essential to the household's functioning. "[B]adly deformed," the servant had a "face so bowed over it was almost hidden, and her whole body was maimed in some painful, mysterious way, probably congenital" (415). "The blurred, dark face was neither young nor old, but crumpled into criss cross wrinkles, irrelevant either to age or suffering" (420). It is a "mutilated face" (420). Head "wagging" and hands shaking, she scatters plates on the table; "no one moved aside for her, or spoke to her, or even glanced after her when she vanished into the kitchen" (415). The silent girl --the narrator does not see her as a woman--prepares and serves every meal, disappearing into the kitchen while the family eats her productions:

Her muteness seemed nearly absolute; she had no coherent language of signs. Yet three times a day she spread that enormous table with solid food, freshly baked bread, huge platters of vegetables, immoderate roasts of meat, extravagant tarts, strudels, pies--enough for twenty people. (421)

The "endless food . . . represented all her life's labors" (427). But her sign-less "language" and labor--pure

nurturance--communicate nothing to the family.¹⁸ Hatsy explains, "She cooks. But she cannot talk so you can understand" (420). So little does the family consider the servant, it is long into the narrator's stay before she even learns the woman's name--Ottilie (420).

Through the narrator's eyes, Ottilie does not fit. "[N]othing could make her seem real, or in any way connected with the life around her" even though she "rattle[s] . . . pans," "setting things to rights" (425). The "crippled servant girl" alone "seemed . . . the only individual in the house" (417). The Müller family was "united"--"all, even the sons-in-law, [seemed to be] one human being divided into several separate appearances" (417). Studying them, the narrator recognizes her own sense of "fragment[ation]," "having left or lost a part of [her]self in every place [she] had travelled, in every life [hers] had touched" (417). She senses that she too needs to be gathered together by family, loved ones, and a domestic structure to feel comfortably complete. But Ottilie "was whole, and

¹⁸The family's lack of recognition of Ottilie's labor is particularly ironic because Father Müller reads Das Kapital daily, as "a very bible," and "knew whole chapters almost by heart" (422). The narrator notes that Müller "took nothing from" the text; he "accepted its dogma as a religion--that is to say, its legendary inapplicable precepts were just, right, proper, one must believe in them, of course, but life, everyday living, was another and unrelated thing" (422).

belonged nowhere" (417). The initial "non-identity" of Ottilie--nameless, faceless, ageless, voiceless--intrigues the narrator, for it poses an identity outside the reference of family. But it is also an impossible "other" identity that no one would want to have, a deformed identity and apparently that of a servant, and thus an identity that reifies the "positive" hold of family and patriarchy on women's subjectivities and lives. The maimed Ottilie, then, despite her function as a supreme nurturer, does not initially disturb the narrator's growing faith in and celebration of the feminine role in domesticity.

But when the narrator discovers in Ottilie's face the traces of all the others--and herself--the story turns grim. One day while the "women were deep in the house, [and] the men were away to the fields," the narrator suddenly sees Ottilie more clearly, and Ottilie sees the narrator. Ottilie "strained toward" the narrator, who "for a moment . . . feared to hear her voice" (425). But though "Ottilie's lips moved, struggling for speech," she can only "pantomime" her story (425, 426). She shows the narrator a portrait of a girl, "patted the picture and her own face, and strove terribly to speak" (426). The narrator "saw the slanted water-blue eyes and the high cheekbones of the

Müllers again, mutilated, almost destroyed, but unmistakable" (426), and

for an instant some filament lighter than cobweb spun itself out between that living center in her and in [the narrator], a filament from some center that held [them] all bound to [their] unescapable common source, so that her life and [the narrator's] were kin, even a part of each other, and the painfulness and strangeness of her vanished. (426)

As soon as the narrator makes this (self-)recognition, Ottilie's purpose is finished for the moment. She immediately returns to the kitchen, reappearing to serve the midday meal, during which Ottilie seems to distinguish the narrator no more than she does the others; "but [Ottilie] was no stranger to [the narrator], and could not be again" (426). No longer can the narrator see Ottilie as "other" to herself or to the household's women.

To underline the meaning of the communion between Ottilie and the narrator, Porter carefully scripts lunchtime to mirror the narrator's discovery:

The youngest brother came in, holding up an opossum he had caught in a trap. He swung the furry body from side to side, his eyes fairly narrowed with pride as he showed us the mangled creature. "No, it is cruel, even for the wild animals," said gentle Annetje to me, "but boys love to kill, they love to hurt things. I am always afraid he will trap poor Kuno [the dog]." . . . Annetje was full of silent, tender solicitudes. The kittens, the puppies, the chicks, the lambs and calves were her special care. She was the only one of the women who caressed the weanling calves when she set the pans

of milk before them. Her child seemed as much a part of her as if it were not yet born. Still, she seemed to have forgotten that Ottilie was her sister. So had all the others. . . .She moved among them as invisible to their imaginations as a ghost. Ottilie their sister was something painful that had happened long ago and now was past and done for; they could not live with that memory or its visible reminder--they forgot her in pure self-defense. (426-27)

Ironically, the nurturing Annetje's consideration extends less to the trapped animal than to her brother, whose "cruel" desire she excuses as natural. Elsewhere, Porter would contrast what she perceived were male and female roles in love: "[W]hen a woman loves a man, she builds him up and supports him and helps him in every possible way to live" but "it is [a man's] deepest instinct to destroy, quite often subtly, insidiously, but constantly and endlessly, [a woman's] very center of being. . . ." ¹⁹ "Holiday" extends that gendered relation to sisters and brothers, daughters and fathers, wives and husbands. The "living center[s]" of the women are commonly "bound"--in service to a destructive male instinct and desire (426).

The "mutilated" Ottilie is, the sequence of the passages suggests, merely another "mangled creature," caught in a trap set by the patriarchal (420, 426). Annetje cannot bear to think about the opossum because it evidences the

¹⁹Katherine Anne Porter, "Letter to Edward Schwartz," 26 March 1958, Letters of Katherine Anne Porter 549.

destruction wrought by male "nature" and desire. Similarly, she cannot bear to think about Otilie's service to the patriarchal household or her sister's relation to herself. And just as Annetje excuses her brother's actions, the narrator strives to make excuses for Annetje's response as well as Otilie's condition. She "reason[s]," "[S]uffering went with life, suffering and labor. . . . [W]hat else could they have done with Otilie?" (427). But enlightened by her pre-lunch encounter with Otilie, the narrator knows that Annetje must disregard both the trapped animal and her sister because she might remember her kinship to both, her own body's entrapment. After all, Otilie's "mutilat[ion]" and "maim[ing]" seems "congenital," as is the patriarchally defined identity of woman (420, 415). The story's women, now all clearly "bound to [some] unescapable common source," their lives "kin," obviously must forget Otilie in "pure self-defense" (426). As women, they too are endangered. So terrible is that recognition, the narrator "could do nothing but promise [her]self that [she] would forget [Otilie], too; and to remember her for the rest of [the narrator's] life" (427).

With her familial identity revealed, Otilie becomes the dark double of idyllic and naturalized domestic constructions of women, shadowing the story in which the

narrator was gaining faith. Ottilie's is the originary story: Ottilie is at once the eldest and ageless, and her sisters are variations. Their faces replicate Ottilie's blurred, indeterminate face, not vice versa. This suggests that the seemingly "congenital" "mutilation" is the standard. Indeed, upon closer inspection, the sisters' serviceable bodies, so apparently different, are revealed to be the same. Despite her "bowed back," Ottilie's body is "wiry and tough" (420, 415) just as her youngest healthy sister Hatsy's is "a network of thin taut ligaments and long muscles elastic as woven steel" when she is nightly "bowed over" scrubbing the floor (420). Any difference is simply by degree: Ottilie's "whole body [is] a mere machine of torture" (427) but Hatsy's too is "perpetual[ly] working" (420). "Holiday" suggests that to go on with their lives, however, women must deny their likeness to their mangled sister; they must refuse to see their own wounding for the sake of proud boys who "love to hurt things" and demand to be fed.

When the narrator had embraced a life of the body (and a "stooping posture") when she first came to the Müllers, an idealized connection to feminine reproductivity had replaced her feelings of "useless[ness]": she "forgot to count the days, they were one like the other except as the colors of

the air changed, deepening and warming to keep step with the advancing season" (418). After the narrator discovers Ottilie's relation to herself and the Müller sisters, however, the narrator recognizes patterns of repetition as deadening rather than fruitful. When Mother Müller dies, the narrator knows that "life would arrange itself again in another order, yet it would be the same" (432-33). The daughters "would hurry back from the burial to milk the cows and feed the chickens" (433). It is as if in discovering her likeness to Ottilie, the narrator can recognize herself in the other women and fear the domestic "order" that holds their lives, despite warm and fertile appearances, "deep within" a barren and narrow house.

Certainly, on the day of Mother Müller's funeral, the narrator herself "realized, for the first time, not death, but the terror of dying" (433). From her attic room, she "heard and felt the ominous order and purpose in the movements and sounds below--the creaking harness and hoofbeats and grating wheels, the muted grave voices" (433). Readers may recall the domestic sounds that had been pleasantly divorced from meaning for the narrator when she first arrived; now she is fully aware of the orderly procession of women's lives straight to the grave--and recognizes her own threatened position. Far from leaving

the narrator untouched, these sounds--now clearly coded--reach the narrator, frightening her (433). She cannot avoid their ominous "order and purpose," even in her attic garret. As the funeral procession leaves the yard and "the sounds receded, [the narrator] lay there not thinking, not feeling, in a mere drowse of relief and weariness" (433). She escapes the seeming futility of women's ordained lives and deaths only by not thinking (just as the sisters refuse to think about Ottilie), taking refuge in the nothingness of sleep.

But this is escapism--and part of this story's "grimness" is that entrapment must be faced. The narrator awakens suddenly to "the howling of a dog" that sounds as though it is "caught in the trap" (433). "[T]here was no one but [the narrator] to let him out," so she races downstairs (433). It is not the dog, but the trapped Ottilie, stooped in the kitchen, whom the narrator discovers howling: "[S]he howled with a great wrench of her body. . . . Shuddering, she babbled and howled and waved her arms in a frenzy through the open window . . . toward the lane where the procession had straightened out into formal order" (433). The narrator misunderstands Ottilie's howling as a display of grief at being left behind. She goes to the barn and harnesses the remaining horse and wagon, places Ottilie

in the seat, and sets off to "overtake the funeral train" (434).

Then, as they jolt down the lane, Ottilie slips from the seat. The narrator

caught hold of her stout belt with [her] free hand, and [the narrator's] fingers slipped between her clothes and bare flesh, ribbed and gaunt and dry against [the narrator's] knuckles. [The narrator's] sense of [Ottilie's] realness, her humanity, this shattered being that was a woman, was so shocking . . . that a howl as doglike and despairing as [Ottilie's] own rose in [the narrator] unuttered and died again, to be a perpetual ghost. (434)

The narrator and Ottilie are haunted by the same sensibility, the knowledge of an entrapment leading to an orderly death--an entrapment signified by the (dead) female body. Ultimately, even maternal flesh must give way to bare bones, the "ribbed and gaunt and dry" body. The narrator's touch of Ottilie's skin aligns the narrator with Ottilie-the-trapped-animal, allowing her to see the reality of the "shattered being that was a woman." And with one touch, Ottilie is more than just a spectacle. At this recognition of Ottilie's "humanity," the narrator mirrors Ottilie-the-trapped-animal. Women and trapped animals are one and the same, and the narrator cannot escape the similarity even if she refuses to articulate it. Neither the narrator's muted nor Ottilie's voiced howls express grief for someone lost: instead, they are despairing howls arising out of their

recognition of woman's pointless connection to the position of death and deformity.

The narrator recognizes her mistake as Ottilie mirrors and assesses her, perhaps amused by their unlikely relation:

Ottilie slanted her eyes and peered at [the narrator], and [the narrator] gazed back. The knotted wrinkles of [Ottilie's] face were grotesquely changed, she gave a choked little whimper, and suddenly she laughed out, a kind of yelp but unmistakably laughter, and clapped her hands for joy, the grinning mouth and suffering eyes turned to the sky. (434)

Considering her, the narrator concludes that they "were both equally the fools of life, equally fellow fugitives from death" (435). She thinks, "We had escaped for one day more at least. We would celebrate our good luck, we would have a little stolen holiday, a breath of spring air and freedom on this lovely, festive afternoon" (435).

It would be nice if the story could conclude here by revealing that the trapped and mangled creature had been merely playing possum all along and now has come alive, now can run away, but Ottilie's physical and spiritual entrapment is real enough. Any "freedom" will be short: the narrator calculates that "there would be time enough to drive to the river down the lane of mulberries and to get back to the house before the mourners returned. There would be time for Ottilie to have a fine supper ready for them. They need not even know she had been gone" (435). The

laboring Otilie thus escapes death and the patriarchal economy that exploits her by going on a holiday that no one knows about. Stopping work, striking out, she gleefully resists the familial order, but like her sisters, she will return to the same work, the same entrapment.

So the narrator cannot fully spring the trap: a holiday offers, of course, only temporary sanctuary. With her final resolution to take a "little holiday" within her holiday, then, the narrator shifts again toward escapism--this time she desires not escape into another version of the domestic, but escape from it altogether. She plans a drive to the river, symbol of renewal, passage, and liberation. Perhaps this escape may be the wise retreat that the narrator mentions at the start of her story, having learned "that if [she] had the sense [she] was born with, [she] would take off like a deer at the first warning of certain dangers" (407). Critics note potential in the decision to leave the house and funeral procession behind for part of a day. Anne Goodwyn Jones admits that the "tiny holiday within 'Holiday' that the narrator takes in the cart with Otilie is a cautious, limited, and temporary response" but notes that it "has marked a departure, however temporary, from the stable and coercive representational structures,

relational possibilities, and dichotomous subject constructions of the patriarchal agrarian household."²⁰

Ottillie's and the narrator's ride to the river critiques and evades the "formal order" of things even as the narrator believes that they will return to it. And though no one in the story will know of their holiday, readers must entertain the idea that a woman might escape the domestic order for more than a holiday. In fact, though the narrator's own holiday has entrenched her in the domestic, she is careful to articulate only Ottillie's necessary return. She remains silent about her own position as someone still on holiday. Perhaps a woman can evade the prescriptions and limitations of a domestic narrative so embedded in our culture if she remains perpetually on holiday--if in taking a joyride, she keeps going.²¹

²⁰Anne Jones, "Katherine Anne Porter's 'Holiday' and the Gender of Agrarianism." Unpublished essay.

²¹Of course, Hollywood has provided us with a story of two women who set out on a short holiday only to "keep on going." Interestingly, however, Thelma and Louise's joyride must be suicidal, since no other "imaginable" story can convincingly convey their escape of the narratives that frame female identity; in fact, Thelma's final cliff-side suggestion for a course of action--"Let's keep going"--is a decision to commit suicide. The film's frame of the women's car frozen in mid-flight keeps the women alive only with a simultaneous dead certainty that they cannot ever be anything other than dead; this ending was the preview audience's choice of a resolution for Thelma and Louise (1991). Porter may have a difficult time imagining alternate possibilities--her stories concentrate mostly on Miranda's departures rather than her arrivals--but her work seldom resolves possibilities away as definitively as Ridley Scott's film.

Though Porter's work never illustrates what that continuing ride would be like, by placing Miranda alone in places as distant from her southern home as a Mexican marketplace and the Colorado mountains, Porter suggests Miranda's continuing attempts to evade a female identity framed by family. However, Miranda's achieved geographic distance from family apparently never assuages her need to continue to strive to escape its ties. For instance, despite depicting the adult Miranda's independent life as a journalist in Denver, far from her southern family and a domestic routine, "Pale Horse, Pale Rider" opens with a lengthy account of Miranda's dream-flight from her childhood home in which people are "tangled together like badly cast fishing lines" and "there are far too many ancestral bones propped up on the mantelpieces" (269). "The Old Order" and "Old Mortality" too depict an adult Miranda distanced geographically from her familial home but unable to escape the hold of family and the stories that bind her to her female relations and outline the limited possibilities open to her. Though her "blood rebel[s] against the ties of blood," family and myth enmesh Miranda bodily, "tough filaments of memory and hope pulling taut backwards and

forwards holding her upright between them" ("OM" 220, "PH, PR" 304).

Part of the problem of "escape" for Miranda, as "Holiday" clarifies, is the way that the female body itself locks women into particular naturalized roles, for the body cannot be escaped. In the final story of the cycle, "Pale Horse, Pale Rider," Miranda openly questions whether she alone possesses her body, whether she "walk[s] about in [her] own skin" or if "it is something . . . borrowed" (270). Cultural and familial stories based on the sexed body so code female identity, particularly in the war-time setting of "Pale Horse, Pale Rider," that Miranda's doubts are easy to understand. Yet Porter's fiction shows that if their bodies seemingly lock women into particular stories, they can also be used to expose and resist culturally determined identities. Not surprisingly, the "unnatural" or grotesque body in the Miranda stories is always also a body signifying some kinship identity. That is, the grotesque body's relation to traditional women (defined by family relationships like sister, mother, aunt, wife) works to dislodge dominant stories of femininity for readers. But as in "Holiday," the counter-stories suggested by mangled bodies tend to be more horrifying than liberating for Miranda, and she remains in a perpetual flight, rejecting

and resisting familiar/grotesque bodies without fully departing from them or arriving at a more comfortable corporeality.²² As Esim Erdim notes about Porter's female characters generally, though Miranda "struggle[s] against established social norms, reject[s] the conventional choices offered by society, and probe[s] deeply into [her] past and into the depths of [her] unconscious, a transformation or rebirth into a fuller life of affirmation or assertion never occurs."²³

"The Grave," the final episode in "The Old Order" and a story that Porter thought "of immense importance" to the cycle, crystallizes the "problem" that the female body poses for Miranda.²⁴ Like "Holiday," "The Grave" exposes a suppressed story about the feminine position in domesticity by exposing a mangled body's correlation to a woman. Specifically, "The Grave" uses a butchered rabbit's body--

²²Arguing that they "contain true reconciliations," Darlene Harbour Unrue points to the endings of "Holiday," "The Grave," and "Pale Horse, Pale Rider" as encompassing the "integration of seeming oppositions" and a discernment of truth that leads to catharsis for Miranda. I think that there is much more ambivalence about Miranda's position at the end of these stories than Unrue allows. See Truth and Vision in Katherine Anne Porter's Fiction 146-47.

²³Erdim 53.

²⁴Katherine Anne Porter, letter to Edward Schwartz, 26 March 1958, Letters of Katherine Anne Porter, ed. Isabel Bayley (New York: Atlantic Monthly P, 1990) 547.

symbolic of fertility and the maternal position--to counter familial stories of feminine beauty and marriage. By grasping her relation to the butchered body, Miranda discovers the threat of being positioned as feminine in the social order, but she cannot articulate or even face her discovery and thus cannot use her knowledge for self-transformation or affirmation. Though the child Miranda "wanted to know the worst," "wanted most deeply to see and to know," "The Grave" illustrates that the adult Miranda must repress--flee--her unavoidable investment in a patriarchal economy: her bodily affiliation with a mother-corpse (342, 366).

"The Grave" begins, however, by focusing on other bodies and other investments. The first paragraph opens and closes with a reference to the cultural trope of the eternal union achieved through marriage, a union signified by the placement of the patriarch's body. Miranda's grandmother twice exhumes and moves her husband's body when the family relocates so that his final resting place will be at her side. Now the grandmother is dead, and the grandfather's body is moved once more to be placed beside hers. The paragraph concludes that the "constancy and possessiveness of [the grandfather's] widow" is rewarded since the grandmother's "husband was to lie beside her for eternity,

as she had planned" (362). Even the terms for the characters in the story--"the grandfather," "the grandmother" "his widow," and "her husband"--privilege a familistic rather than personal identity achieved through a marriage that outlasts death.

Buried in the same paragraph is the suggestion that the couple's reunion after death is prompted by the family's financial concerns more than sentiment or enduring ties: the family cemetery is situated on land that is part of a parcel put up for sale after the grandmother's death "for the benefit of certain of her children" (362). For their profit, "It was necessary to take up the bodies and bury them again in the family plot in the big new public cemetery, where the grandmother had been buried" (362). "The Grave" begins, then, as does "Holiday," by suggesting the possibility of competing stories about domestic arrangements; the possessive grandmother's sanctioned romantic story envelopes an equally true story of her (equally possessive) sons' desire for economic gain. The exposure of dual motives for moving the grandfather's body--marital fidelity vs. financial profit--foreshadows Miranda's discovery that the female body too is subject to contesting stories of sentiment and cost. At the story's start, Miranda knows only a romantic (seemingly above and outside

an economic) story framing feminine experience; by story's end, she understands that the romance she associated with femininity operates within a market-driven economy balancing male desire, destructiveness, and consumption against female reproductivity and death. Initially familiar with only the "pleasantly sweet" side of stories of femininity, Miranda discovers to her horror a woman's position of "mingled sweetness and corruption" (363, 367).

When the nine-year-old Miranda and her older brother, Paul, explore the old family "graves . . . lying open and empty" while they are out "hunt[ing] rabbits and doves," they are excited by the substantive "treasures" that the pits yield (362, 363). In a handful of earth that has "pleasantly sweet, corrupt smell," Miranda discovers "a silver dove no larger than a hazel nut, with spread wings and a neat fan-shaped tail. The breast had a deep round hollow in it" (363). Paul too finds something in one of the graves, "a thin wide gold ring carved with intricate flowers and leaves" (363). Both coveting what the other has, they trade "treasures," Paul delighted with what he realizes is the "screw head for a coffin!" and Miranda "smitten at sight of the ring" (363). Miranda places "the gold ring on her thumb; it fitted perfectly" (363).

The idea that what the children find is "treasure" seems to place them romantically outside a marketplace economy; no capital investment, no labor, no purchases, not even rights to the land--simply a stroke of luck and a natural spirit of adventure uncovers buried treasure. They both get something they want for nothing. Just as the first paragraph's discussion of marital fidelity seems to obscure rather romantically details of familial inheritance and real estate transactions, the children's conception that they have found "treasure" codes their exchange sentimentally rather than economically. Indeed, occurring so quickly after the narratorial discussion of marital fidelity, the siblings' exchange plays out the pledge of rings at a marriage ceremony--most likely Miranda's ring is a wedding band--more than it enacts a business deal. But "The Grave" turns on Miranda's assessing the personal costs of their romantic exchange, and the dove coffin screw, a symbol of salvation and love with a hole cut in its breast, effectively represents the heart(lessness?) of the bargain that the children strike. Miranda's offering to her male relation prettifies the coffin and its suggestion of death and decay; similarly, the story poses, the bride offers up a pretty figure that ultimately cloaks death. The body itself is the object the bride exchanges for her perfectly fitted

ring, and it is an object that can be wholly consumed in the exchange.

Initially, as I have said, Miranda perceives only the rich pleasure of the feminine position without any awareness of costs. The ring seems to betoken the kind of beauty that Miranda had been raised to value and wish for: in "Old Mortality," eight-year-old Miranda dreams that "she would one day suddenly receive beauty, as by inheritance, riches laid suddenly in her hands through no deserts of her own" (177). Indeed, the ring does mark a transformation. As soon as she completes the exchange, Miranda's sensibilities shift against her own tomboyish behavior and appearance. "Waving her thumb gently and watching her gold ring glitter, Miranda lost interest in shooting" (364). The "ring, shining with the serene purity of fine gold on her rather grubby thumb, turned her feelings against her overalls and sockless feet, toes sticking through the thick brown leather straps" (365).

Her outfit is identical to her brother's, and "[o]rdinarily Miranda preferred her overalls to any other dress, though it was making father a scandal in the countryside" and old women chastise that she is going against "the Scriptures to dress" as she does (364, 365). The ring on her thumb causes her to align her feelings with

"the law of female decorum" but only because it arouses her longing for the beauty and leisure typically ascribed to privileged white women--"vague stirrings of desire" founded on "family legend" (364, 365). Examining her ring, she wants to fit herself into the story; she

wanted to go back to the farmhouse, take a good cold bath, dust herself with plenty of [her sister] Maria's violet talcum powder--provided Maria was not present to object, of course--put on the thinnest, most becoming dress she owned, with a big sash, and sit in a wicker chair under the trees. (365)

The imagined scene stands in stark contrast to Miranda's activities of tramping and shooting, and Miranda decides that she must go home.

Just as she decides to tell Paul that she is returning to the house, he shoots and kills a rabbit. Miranda approaches as Paul

took out his sharp, competent bowie knife and started to skin the body. He did it very cleanly and quickly. Uncle Jimbilly knew how to prepare the skins so that Miranda always had fur coats for her dolls, for though she never cared much for her dolls she liked seeing them in fur coats. (366)

Uninterested in playing with dolls to practice a maternal role, Miranda dresses her dolls to mirror the kind of femininity espoused in family stories. The rabbits' skins make her dolls into pretty spectacle, the display of their furs framing them as privileged and leisured, emblematic of "luxury and a grand way of living" that she has heard about

from her family (365). Miranda's fantasy of putting on her "most becoming dress" and sitting passively positions her also as a privileged doll. Like the gold band, then, the rabbit skin suggests a feminine role that Miranda longs to achieve, but a role in which she is objectified. She does not yet comprehend this role's affiliation with the dead rabbit nor appreciate the threat inherent in the "advantaged" femininity memorialized in family legend.

So Miranda does not feel any squeamishness about Paul's butchering the animal; in fact, the rabbit's skinned body seems as beautiful as its fur to her, and she appreciates her brother's skill with the knife. She

watched admiringly while her brother stripped the skin away as if he were taking off a glove. The flayed flesh emerged dark scarlet, sleek, firm; Miranda with thumb and finger felt the long fine muscles with the silvery flat strips binding them to the joints. (366)

She enjoys her brother's expertise in exposing the body underneath the fur without feeling personally engaged even after Paul points to its "oddly bloated belly" (366). Stimulated by the revelation that the rabbit was pregnant, she watches as Paul "carefully"

slit the thin flesh from the center ribs to the flanks, and a scarlet bag appeared. He slit again and pulled the bag open, and there lay a bundle of tiny rabbits, each wrapped in a thin scarlet veil. The brother pulled these off and there they were, dark gray, their sleek wet down lying in minute even ripples, like a baby's head just washed,

their unbelievably small delicate ears folded close, their little blind faces almost featureless.

Miranda said, "Oh, I want to see," under her breath. She looked and looked--excited but not frightened, for she was accustomed to the sight of animals killed in hunting--filled with pity and astonishment and a kind of shocked delight in the wonderful little creatures for their own sakes, they were so pretty. She touched one of them ever so carefully, "Ah, there's blood running over them," she said and began to tremble without knowing why. Yet she wanted most deeply to see and to know. Having seen, she felt at once as if she had known all along. . . . She understood a little of the secret, formless intuition in her own mind and body, which had been clearing up, taking form, so gradually and so steadily she had not realized that she was learning what she had to know. (366-67)

For the first time, Miranda realizes the physical connection between mothers and babies--not simply in animals, but in people. She associates the unborn rabbits with "a baby's head" and when her brother tells her, "'They were just about ready to be born,'" Miranda responds, "'I know . . . like kittens. I know, like babies'" (367). Her delight in their unveiled prettiness ("they were so pretty") is cut short, however, by her consciousness of "blood running." Suddenly, Miranda senses a counter-story to family legends of feminine prettiness, a counter-story embodied by the dead mother. The story suggested by the rabbit's mangled body and bloody offspring confirms Miranda's own history: her mother had died giving birth to Miranda (339).

Miranda grows "quietly and terribly agitated, . . . looking down at the bloody heap" as she realizes her relation to the rabbit as female and of the female connection to birth, blood, and death. In this moment, she is "learning what she had to know" as a woman and what "her own mind and body" has already "intuit[ed]" (367, emphasis mine). Now understanding more fully all that the rabbit skin symbolizes and her bodily connection to the mangled corpse, she tries to reject the association: "'I don't want the skin,' she said, 'I won't have it'" (367). Heeding Miranda's rejection, "Paul buried the young rabbits again in their mother's body, wrapped the skin around her, carried her to a clump of sage bushes, and hid her away" (367). The episode thus collapses marriage, childbirth, and death: the babies wear "scarlet veil[s]," the mother's body is a grave, prettiness and blood and earth mingle in the "sweetness and corruption" now clearly associated with the female body (367). What Miranda "ha[s] to know" but what is "hid[den] . . . away" is her own body's position not (simply) as pretty object, not (simply) as symbol of fertility, but as a potential site of death (367). She can be butchered by men and by babies.

As soon as she witnesses the counter-story, she is silenced; she must know but never speak of her initiation.

Paul warns Miranda four times not to tell the "secret," not to "tell a living soul" about what she saw because he will be blamed for "leading [Miranda] into things [she] ought not to do" (367). And "Miranda never told, she did not even wish to tell anybody" (367). Indeed, after a few days "the whole worrisome affair" simply "sank quietly into her mind and was heaped over by accumulated thousands of impressions, for nearly twenty years" (367). In this way, Miranda represses the entire traumatic scene. Miranda's handling of the dual nature of the feminine position mirrors the way that the Müllers deal with Otilie through willed forgetfulness and silence. Esim Erdim suggests that Miranda's silence punctuates the story's purpose: "to show how women comply with their own victimization."²⁵ Miranda's own mind becomes another "burial place," stifling the expression of the woman's story (367).

The buried memory (and, as a result, the story) is suddenly resurrected in the adult woman:

One day she was picking her path among the puddles and crushed refuse of a market street in a strange city of a strange country, when without warning, plain and clear in its true colors as if she looked through a frame upon a scene that had not stirred nor changed since the moment it happened, the episode of that far-off day leaped from its burial place before her mind's eye. She was so reasonlessly horrified she halted suddenly

²⁵Erdim 61.

staring, the scene before her eyes dimmed by the vision back of them. An Indian vendor had held up before her a tray of dyed sugar sweets, in the shapes of all kinds of small creatures: birds, baby chicks, baby rabbits, lambs, baby pigs. . . . It was a very hot day and the smell in the market, with its piles of raw flesh and wilting flowers, was like the mingled sweetness and corruption she had smelled that other day in the empty cemetery at home: the day she had remembered always until now vaguely as the time she and her brother had found treasure in the opened graves. Instantly upon this thought the dreadful vision faded, and she saw clearly her brother, whose childhood face she had forgotten, standing in the blazing sunshine, again twelve years old, a pleased sober smile in his eyes, turning the silver dove over and over in his hands. (367-68)

The vendor's tray of sweets in the shape of baby animals and the mingled scents of earth and flesh trigger the "horrific" counter-story. The marketplace site must remind Miranda of her position not just as a buyer of commodities, but because she is a woman, as a body ready for consumption like the "piles of raw flesh" for sale in the streets, a body ready to be cannibalized for love. She overcomes the anxiety caused by this awareness by removing herself mentally from the marketplace, its flesh and babies, and replacing the "dreadful vision" with an image of her brother's childhood face and a memory of a day in which they found buried "treasure" (368). Forgetting her ring, the butchered rabbit and its babies, and her position in the market, she avoids assessing the costs of being a woman.

Thus, the passage quickly moves Miranda again toward the kind of repression that occurs in "Holiday"--the sister escapes the danger her own body manifests by ignoring her relation to the mangled creature.²⁶ Like Annetje, Miranda does this by focusing on the childish play and pleasure of the brother, even though Paul is the one who expertly kills and butchers creatures symbolic of love and fertility. In his pre-adolescent fraternal position--a position emphasized by identifying Paul as "Brother" and "the brother" in the butchering passage--Paul does not carry for his sister the "threat" accompanying an adult man (the lover, husband, father who impregnates). Miranda overcomes her anxiety,

²⁶Constance Rooke and Bruce Wallis, in "Myth and Epiphany in Porter's 'The Grave,'" Studies in Short Fiction 3.15 (1978), alone read the final scene as "not a repression of the experience with the rabbits, not a retreat into the easier memory of that day, but an awakening to further knowledge" and a "new life" signified by the dove and "blazing sunshine" mentioned in the passage. Their analysis suggests that Porter conceived of a Christian afterlife as a comforting and happy resolution for Miranda's discovery of (the threat of) her reproductive capacities. But elsewhere, Porter points with irony to the promise of resurrection: in Katherine Anne Porter's Women: The Eye of Her Fiction, (Austin: U of Texas P, 1983), Jane Krause DeMouy notes, for instance, that in "Old Mortality," "six weeks after her wedding--exactly the length of Lent, which, ironically, ends in the celebration of resurrected life--Amy is dead of a combination of consumption and medicinal overdose" (page). It seems more likely that in "The Grave," "the suggestion of rebirth is made only to be totally crushed," as Esim Erdim states in "The Ring or the Dove," for Porter's "purpose was to show how women comply with their own victimization, thus rendering the experience of rebirth unlikely" (57-58, 61).

then, by placing herself back in a presumably pre-sexual play and focusing only on her brother's pleasure with his acquisition. Not surprisingly, the stories that suggest the adult Miranda's romantic entanglements, "Old Mortality" and "Pale Horse, Pale Rider," carefully negotiate her relations to men, for as "The Grave" makes clear, love or marriage stories produce bloody bodies and female corpses.

Thus, when Miranda thinks of her mother and aunt's generation, whose "parties and dances were their market" for the marriages that society deemed not only appropriate and "curative" but unavoidable for pretty women, "Miranda found herself deliberately watching a long procession of living corpses, festering women stepping gaily towards the charnel house, their corruption concealed under laces and flowers, their dead faces lifted smiling . . ." ("Old Mortality" 182-83, 216).²⁷ Miranda's Aunt Amy wore a gray wedding dress, insisting "'I shall wear mourning if I like, . . . it is my funeral, you know'" (182). And she is right; Amy grows ill and dies, perhaps a suicide, six weeks after her wedding day. Like her Aunt Amy, the eighteen-year-old Miranda

²⁷Amy's mother, Miranda's grandmother, tells her daughter "that marriage and children would cure her of everything." She remembers, "'Why, when I was your age no one expected me to live a year. It was called greensickness, and everybody knew there was only one cure'" (182).

experiences marriage as more of an illness than a cure, though she eloped in an attempt to "run away" from her family (220). The "only feeling [Miranda] could rouse in herself about" her own modern marriage is "an immense weariness as if it were an illness that she might one day hope to recover from" (213). The only text that depicts Miranda's romantic involvement with a man, "Pale Horse, Pale Rider," scripts funeral processions to punctuate the couple's dates (see 278-281).

In fact, at the close of her doomed love affair in "Pale Horse, Pale Rider," a twenty-four-year-old Miranda is herself a living "corpse" (316). In this love story set during the influenza epidemic occurring in the First World War, an ill Miranda constantly applies make-up to cover her sickly pallor, evoking the similarly pretty concealment of her mother's and aunt's decay and "corruption" described in "Old Mortality." Miranda seems more an embattled soldier than a lover in this love story, and she sees herself best reflected by the wounded soldier she visits in the course of her charity work: in his mangled and hostile presence, she "meet[s her] state of mind embodied, face to face. . . . 'My own feelings about this whole thing, made flesh'" (277). Eventually, Miranda literally returns from the dead--but to no happy romantic reunion: while Miranda is hospitalized,

the war ends but the soldier Adam dies of influenza himself. "'Still,'" Miranda confides to her friend as she applies her make-up at the story's end, "'no one need pity this corpse if we look properly to the art of the thing'" (316). One wonders how different this corpse is from the seemingly healthy women with "brightly tinted faces" who inhabit the early pages of the story, how different from the corpses dancing through the pages of "Old Mortality" (275).

As Mary Titus notes, the "same trail of blood" links the cycle's stories and in each leads back to Miranda's initial and "violent lesson in the facts of womanhood."²⁸ In "Old Mortality," Miranda's recognition of the gap between idealized femininity and "bloody" female experience occurs at the racetrack, a setting perhaps as suggestive as "The Grave"'s marketplace, particularly as the story takes pains to clarify that in the family's estimation, southern girls of Miranda's station do not grow up to be jockeys. Her father takes Miranda and her sister to see the horse races as a treat and allows them to bet a dollar each on their uncle's "hundred to one shot," Miss Lucy, the "namesake" of the horse that Miranda's Aunt Amy selected as her own. Their horse wins, and Miranda jumps at the chance to go down

²⁸Mary Titus, "The Agrarian Myth and Southern Womanhood" 204.

to the field to celebrate as the winner comes in. Miranda notes that the jockey smiles and is "perfectly serene" whereas his horse suffers:

Miss Lucy was bleeding at the nose, two thick red rivulets were stiffening her tender mouth and chin, the round velvet chin that Miranda thought the nicest kind of chin in the world. Her eyes were wild and her knees were trembling, and she snored when she drew her breath.

Miranda stood staring. That was winning, too. Her heart clinched tight; that was winning, for Miss Lucy. So instantly and completely did her heart reject that victory, she did not know when it happened, but she hated it, and was ashamed that she had screamed and shed tears for joy when Miss Lucy, with her bloodied nose and bursting heart had gone past the judges' stand a neck ahead. She felt empty and sick. . . . (199)

Mary Titus observes the blood connection between Miss Lucy and the tubercular Amy, whose "blood . . . stains her handkerchiefs when she coughs [and] suggests the physical facts of sexuality, which she and her admirers would deny": "The price of winning for a woman is blood: Amy hemorrhages after 'dancing all night three times in one week' (191) and Miss Lucy . . . has 'thick red rivulets' covering her 'tender mouth and chin' after her triumph at the races (199)."²⁹ That Miranda confuses the identity of Miss Honey, Gabriel's second wife who is clearly his substitute for Amy, with another of her uncle's horses further emphasizes that

²⁹Titus, "The Agrarian Myth and Southern Womanhood" 204-5.

the women are so much horseflesh (200). Miss Lucy's bleeding body revises one version of a story--triumph--but leaves Miranda "empty and sick," certain only that she does not want to participate in it. After witnessing the horse race, Miranda finds the romance of Amy as distasteful and distressing as the dismal domestic affairs of Gabriel and Miss Honey.

That at the end of "The Grave," in her late twenties, Miranda is in "a strange city of a strange country" implies that she ultimately evades her family's ideal of femininity (sitting passively in the chair, a beautiful doll); that she is "picking her path" suggests that she avoids fully enacting the terrible counter-story (the mutilated or dead mother/wife) as well. Readers may feel some hope, then, that Miranda's path leads her away on a course of her own choosing. In fact, the narratives dash any illusions that readers or Miranda may have of unencumbered escape. "Old Mortality," for instance, closes with Miranda's determination to escape "the legend of the past" promoted by her family and "know the truth about what happens to me" (221). Her family, she feels, "denied her the right to look at the world with her own eyes, [and] . . . demanded that she accept their version of life and yet could not tell her the truth, not in the smallest thing" (219). The narrative

states, however, that only "in her hopefulness, her ignorance" can the young woman "assure[] herself" that she will "know the truth" about herself (221). The narrative insistence that Miranda cannot know herself outside of the stories that the family continues to "tell . . . to each other" implies that the familial stories already encompass Miranda's "truth" (221).

The "truth" for Porter seems to be that romance can only mask death; underneath lace and cosmetics are dead and mangled women. Even women who do not fall in love and marry are as deformed by domestic standards as those who do -- witness Ottilie and Cousin Eva Parrington. In "The Fig Tree," already used to her father's inscrutable commands and her Grandmother's dictum "'This way and no other! . . . 'It must be done this way, and no other!'" (354), a young Miranda is ecstatic to discover from her great aunt that there are "'other worlds, a million other worlds'" (361):

"Like this one?" asked Miranda, timidly.
 "Nobody knows, child. . . ." [Porter's
 ellipsis]
 "Nobody knows, nobody knows," Miranda sang to a
 tune in her head, . . . she was so dazzled with
 joy. . . . (361)

In the rigid order of Miranda's world, uncertainty itself is liberating, and the possibility of other ways of living, of other worlds and orders, wondrous. But in the closing line of the story, Porter places Miranda in a "fog of bliss"

(362). Porter seems reluctant to allow Miranda to experience anything more than a foggy, misdirected faith in other ways of being. Her hesitation is perhaps explained by her wavering between two causes of women's situations: for Porter, women are entrapped by patriarchal stories at the same time they are innately "corrupt" or diseased as women, undermined by their very bodies. Hence, Miranda must always escape, deny, remain outside--and after a while the hovering seems less like a radical holiday and more like a perpetual dis-ease. This is frustrating for a feminist reader.³⁰ Yet by exposing the constraints of stories on female identity and by uncovering the lady's body buried in myth, Porter is, as Patricia Yaeger suggests, "at work constructing a female tradition that refuses the genteel obsession with writing (or inhabiting) the beautiful body in exchange for something more politically active and vehement"--writing of dissent and anger.³¹

³⁰For an excellent analysis of how the ending of "Old Mortality" subverts feminist politics, see Suzanne W. Jones, "Reading the Endings in Katherine Anne Porter's 'Old Mortality,'" Southern Quarterly 31.3 (1993): 29-44.

³¹Yaeger 312.

CONCLUSION

In 1927, Elizabeth Madox Roberts, another white southern novelist, opened My Heart and My Flesh with a description of Luce, a young girl who is later conflated with the narrator, watching a lady play the piano:

[Luce] looked at [Charlotte Bell] and felt her presence reach past the white dress as if there were some large thing inside. Then she laid her bare. She tore away the clothes from around her shoulders and opened her body. She emptied the heart out of it and flung out the entrails, for she had seen men butcher a hog. She went searching down through blood and veins, liver and lights, smelt and kidney. Out came the fat, the guts, the ribs. She was looking for something. Then on beyond, past the flesh, to the bone, she was searching. Past the brains, past the skull bone. She flung everything aside as she took it out and went deeper, eager to find. Past the bones she came to the skin again, on the other side, and finally to the red of the yarn carpet, everything rejected, nothing found, nothing left. Quickly she reassembled Miss Charlotte. She brought back the bone, the flesh, the organs. She hooked the right arm onto its shoulder and hooked on the left. She set her head on her shoulders and fitted her back into her dress. Put together again, Miss Charlotte suggested something within, hinted of it with her turning mouth and with the slight movement of her limbs under the pretty dress, gave a brief warning of it in the way the lace was sewed into the dress and the way the two large pins were placed to hold up her hair.¹

¹Elizabeth Madox Roberts, My Heart and My Flesh (New York: Viking, 1927) 7-8.

Roberts's passage serves as description of the way that many southern white women writing in the twenties and thirties turned to the lady's body, searching for something that would help them define themselves. The process, as Roberts makes clear, is not always pleasant or conclusive.

When I started this dissertation, I set out to trace the ways that privileged women who considered themselves southern interacted with a cultural imperative that they be bodiless, selfless, morally and spiritually transcendent, and by design and nature meant for a life of domesticity. I wanted to discover how the southern lady might write herself, what kind of body and self she could author.

I expected the fiction of these white women who had a personal stake in depictions of the southern lady would affirm corporeality as liberatory. Instead of purely celebratory depictions of the female body, however, I found in their work depictions that tempered feminist resistance with an acknowledgment not just of the difficulties of re-writing the body but of the pain attendant to efforts at wresting a body from the social stories that encircle it and reproducing it in conflict with those stories. What most disturbed me about the female-authored novels I read was the overabundance of overwhelmingly grotesque images associated with female corporeality, but such images were not

unaccountable. Sidonie Smith argues, "To the degree that woman contests [the] roles and postures [of the "proper lady"] by pursuing her own desire and independence from men, she becomes a cultural grotesque."² So perhaps the novels I examined were more realistic than idealistic. Still, I wanted these novels, and the women who wrote them, to realize desire and independence in a way that was not personally deforming. (After all, as a relatively privileged, married, white woman living in the South, I am inheriting these stories!) Ultimately, the texts that present the least "deformed" women are the ones that portray women who do not marry and who resist familial affiliations; for the rest, as Zelda Fitzgerald would summarize, "love is bitter and all there is."³ Yet each writer I studied remained hopeful about the possibilities of social change, especially at the level of the family.

As a feminist, I appreciate the powerful social critique offered by modernist southern women writers, and I will be happy if my project serves to introduce readers to a

²Sidonie Smith Subjectivity, Identity, and the Body: Women's Autobiographical Practices in the Twentieth Century (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1993) 16.

³Zelda Fitzgerald, letter to Scott Fitzgerald, late summer/early fall 1930, The Collected Writings: Zelda Fitzgerald, ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli (London: Little, Brown, 1991) 456.

few female writers often overshadowed by male counterparts who do not offer the same brand of social critique. Despite recent alleged "assaults" on the canon, it is still Faulkner who is read, not Evelyn Scott. The critical insights of Mencken are still quoted; who can remember Frances Newman? Scott Fitzgerald is anthologized, not his wife--even though Zelda Fitzgerald wrote some of the stories that were published under her husband's byline. Of the women writers my dissertation focuses on, only Katherine Anne Porter's work is widely available. Broader consideration of southern women's writing--including literature by women of all races and classes--in the modernist period could serve to redefine contemporary assessments of the Southern Renaissance and bring women's perspectives to bear on representations of southern culture and its structuring bodies. I would like to envision this project as a step toward that goal.

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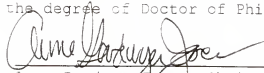
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

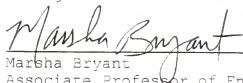
Rhonda Morris completed undergraduate work in 1987 at the University of Georgia, where she majored in English. She began graduate course work and teaching in 1989 at the University of Florida, earning a master's degree in English in 1991 and a doctoral degree in 1997. She lives in Gainesville, Florida.

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.



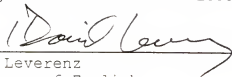
Anne Goodwyn Jones, Chair
Associate Professor of English

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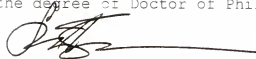
Marsha Bryant
Associate Professor of English

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David Leverenz
Professor of English

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Stephanie Smith
Associate Professor of English

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This dissertation was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Department of English in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and to the Graduate School and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

December 1997

Dean, Graduate School